

ARENA

EDITORS JOHN DAVENPORT JACK
LINDSAY AND RANDALL SWINGLER

PRODUCTION EDITOR: TONY ADAMS

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EDITORS' NOTE

Tradition and culture: the words ring like a cracked bell; and indeed the dreary ritual reminds one of a middle-class funeral, even down to the sherry. The loved one died of sleeping sickness—*encephalitis lethargica*, caused by the T.S.E.—T.S.E. fly. Anything so eclectic was bound to collapse. The "culture" of the traditionalists is entirely synthetic, the result of nostalgia for an imaginary past. The self-appointed mourners might well take as their device a dodo hatching an atom bomb. We are invited to believe in the paradox that a civilization which destroyed its greatest artists produced them; which is like saying that skin diseases are so beautiful that the patients—Baudelaire, Flaubert—should not be cured.

By putting its critics in an isolation ward the century thought to sterilize them. Part of the trouble was due to Kant's *Zweckmassigkeit ohne Zweck*, from which Schopenhauer derived his theory of a beautiful art divorced from an evil world. Axel began to build his castle, and his successors have furnished it with a mass of contradictory *bric-à-brac*, some of it Catholic, some of it humanistic, where Aquinas and Voltaire keep uneasy company.

Arena has been attacked for being anti-traditionalist and for not being sufficiently revolutionary. A mild joke at the expense of the logical positivists was no doubt partly responsible for some of our critics' irritability. All that we meant was that we believe in the unity of life and disbelieve in the divorce of art from society. Artists, being men, cannot stay out of life. The falseness of "top surface" culture is shown by the fact that it has to invent an imaginary tradition, assembled out of dead symbols. But there is a living tradition: the unity of man. Let us in our turn quote Donne's familiar lines, hearing in them not a bell tolling for a cadaver, but a chime for the living world: "No man is an *Island*, entire in himself; every man is a piece of the *Continent*, a part of the *Main*; if a clod be washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the less, as well as if a *Promontory* were, as well as if a *Manor* of thy *friends* or of *thine own* were; any man's death diminishes *me*, because I am involved in Mankind"

Eugenio Montale

TWO POEMS

THE STORM

Les princes n'ont point d'yeux pour voir
ces grands merveilles:

Leurs mains ne servent plus qu'à nous
persecuter . . .

(*Agrippa d'Aubigné: A Dieu.*)

*The storm that is dripping on the hard
magnolia leaves the long thunder claps
of march month and the hailstones*

*(the sounds of crystal in your nocturnal nest
surprise you; gold
extinguished on the mahogany on the edge
of the bound books, still burns
as a grain of sugar in your eyelid shell)*

*the lightnings white glister
on trees and walls surprising them in that
moment's eternity—marble, manna
and destruction—that engraved within you
you wear for your condemnation and that binds you
more to me than love, strange sister*

*and then the rude burst, the rattles and the groan
of the tambourines upon the fleeing fosse
the trampling of the fandango and above
a vague gesticulation . . .*

*As when
you turn around and with your hand
clear your forehead of your cloud of hair
saluting me—and go into the darkness.*

POEM

*Of a metropolitan Christmas
A mistletoe, a cluster hung from childhood
of faith and hoar frost on your washing table
and on the oval mirror that is now darkened
by your curls à la bergère, between holy pictures
and portraits of boys stuck in rather a hurry
in the frames: an empty beaker
little cups of ashes and of peel,
the lights of Mayfair, then at the crossings
the souls, the bottles that couldn't open,
no longer war nor peace, the tardy whirring
of a pigeon with no power to follow you
on the automatic steps that slide you down . . .*

(Translated by Bernard Wall)

Elio Vittorini

THE VILLAGES ARE IN RUINS

I KNOW HOW SOMEONE WHO HAS NEVER BEEN HERE MIGHT well imagine this country of ours, someone who has only seen its elongated shape on the page of an atlas. As a highland of dry red earth between two seas, one east, one west, arid, treeless, burnt with the breath of the winds and the sun and the breath of salt. And for long stretches that's just what it is as soon as you are above three hundred metres altitude on a journey between one towered and domed city and another: arid for long stretches, naked for long stretches, highlying between Emilia and

Tuscany or between Siena and Rome just as the desert is the desert between one oasis and another.

Across the desert there are men who travel and in our highlands there are people who are nomads, making their way to and fro, northwards or from north to south, in long trains: standing for three or four days on end, looking out beyond the draught and smoke in which the journey happens, so as to see what this land called Italy really is, land everywhere the same and binding together such different places as Bari and Bologna, Catanzaro and Genoa.

For instance, I'm an Apulian and I couldn't rest until I'd begun this to and fro-ing between Molfetta and Milan. Each station jolts me out of my torpor, the torpor of a man strap-hanging by the luggage rack while through the windows grown dirty with fatigue I look at new heights without a blade of grass like the Murge, now we are near descending to the river Po.

Or I'm Milanese but, in spite of that, I haven't been able to stay in my plain with its thousand trades and I too have had to try my hand at dealing in lemons and join in the to and fro-ing of the long train that flaps its curtains to salute the desert of sun and stone as it crosses the land, when dawn smells of ricotta on the border between Campania and Calabria, when late in the afternoon the crickets are even louder than our own whistle that all the way from Catania to Syracuse grazes the rocks as it screams for help.

Or I'm Ligurian from the Bracco and could have been quite happy working in a dockyard at Sestri, I'm Emilian from Val di Taro and could have been quite happy churning cheese around Parma, but instead I had to start going to and fro, earning my bread in one place and the next, at Terni, Naples, Messina, maybe only so that I too can do my six or seven crossings, while my chest itches with sweat, crossings of the country that with the light of my journey spreads with rocks curving in the moon—as I thought as a boy only happened with my Bracco and its hares, my Val di Taro and its shepherds—and to see that it is land made to be crossed, made just so that you should want to get into a train and traverse it and then get in a fresh train and traverse it anew.

II. To this highland of a thousand kilometres the last war brought calamity for it was cut into two parts and we had to stay

put for two years half on one side, half on the other.

For two years I couldn't get beyond Bologna and for two years another man like me couldn't come up beyond the level of Rome. We had to stay put in the desert for those two years. We were in Milan and couldn't get down to Reggio Calabria so we were in the desert. We were at Trani or Barletta or Taranto and we couldn't take a train for north Italy so we were in the desert. Our long trains with their flapping curtains ran to and fro no more. People said they were on fire in the sidings under the sheds and our railway lines had been blotted out by the stone face of the highlands, the shining rails were wrenched away, the bridges broken.

But was there anyone who didn't rush to the station and the trains the moment the war was over. To and fro the journeyings through the highlands of Italy began once more, even more packed than ever:

on foot were the ragged thousands who came from Apulia seeking news of a soldier, of a girl who ran away from home, of a shop where they once sold wine and oil, all on foot, all determined to reach what they called "Milan itself", likewise determined not to find the news they were seeking until they had reached Milan and after such travels through the desert had seen a Milanese street and its line-up barrows of greenstuff sellers, their countrymen, and spoken with those countrymen of theirs in Milan:

who, in their turn, were travelling the opposite way, seeking for news, in their turn, of a soldier, of a relative or friend, of an old mamma, of an olive grove, of four sheep and a dog, maybe only a dog, determined on their side not to accept the news as sure until they got to the piazza at Bitonto or Trani or found themselves in front of a closed door:

and all on foot, in their turn, across highlands where the stubble between rock and rock took fire from the sun's breath, where at night you slept in the ditches at the edge of the road, with only a step more to be under the snows:

or in trucks seized in the tumult at the blockhouses no matter where they were going provided they took us, south, east, north, west, sitting on sacks or petrol cans, or on suitcases or on iron scrap, squeezed by peasants' buttocks, squeezed with modern and ancient smells some archaic, primeval, dating from the beginnings of the sweated earth and at the same time a 1945 barber's smell, face in a cutting wind, hair in the wind as once the curtains of the trains

and coat collar up round your neck that nestles with ever sharper need of consolation:

sharper, sharper as our self is when we get to our destination when we say here we are and instead we can't manage to rest save for a month or a year, three days or ten years, just the time each of us needs to put aside the little sum for a new change, and once again off we go across Italy a long journey on foot, by truck or by train and again liberation from the solitude that buries us as soon as we know we've stopped without any possibility of moving.

They rushed up to the bronze gates that were re-opening or beat on them—all those men and women who had to stay put for two years on one side or the other of the gothic line. And there wasn't a single one (not even from the backward regions of Bergamo) who didn't plan or carry out a little journey, at least for a day, at least for thirty or forty kilometres, at least on an ox-wagon, to see someone or something.

What to see?

To be sure it wasn't always one's mother nor always one's wife or husband or children. It wasn't always someone or something you knew already. Nor your own native town. It was to re-establish contact with something *other* than yourself, with *the rest* and this meant re-discovering your mother in your mother or your house in your house even if you hadn't left them for two years, even if you were only leaving them now.

Good-bye . . . Good-bye. So we said good-bye to our dear ones who had been our company of phantoms in the two years of loneliness and we ran to embrace people we didn't know so that we could get back into the world and the world could get back into us.

And bit by bit the trains began again. First it was for short stretches like Florence-Pistoia and Urbino-Todi, then for all the thousands six hundred kilometres of arid earth, shrilly whistling with ten times as many people as our trains had ever carried, and with travelling-pleasure now ten times ten more childish, under the sun of the windows, more than there had even been in our trains even in the days when you could stretch your legs on the seats and you left the stations behind with a mere change in the roar without seeing them face to face for a second.

The great to and fro-ing of people began again, the thing that makes Italy one country instead of thousands of countries, it was the spring of 1945, it was the summer, and now in 1946 it's still

growing, northerners and southerners who are trying to settle in, veterans searching, partisans searching, good folk looking for something to do, prostitutes who are coming up from Rome in hordes, not at all so as to be prostitutes somewhere else but just to fix not be so anymore now they're no longer forced to trot the pavements by the desperate feeling of being cut off . . .

Cut off from what? It wasn't from any one or rarely from anyone in your own home, but as I said, it was from a lot, as though from the face of the earth, and now the scoundrel of Turin is off to Naples to search for his natural existence, just as the whore from Catania will be looking for hers at Genoa, as each of them thinks it will finally flower when the to-ing and fro-ing has been achieved.

All our people today and since April 1945, are in those trucks and trains and in those caravans of footsloggers with cracked shoes and bandaged feet and barefoot:

in a train there's my mother too who is coming to look for me, travelling eight days from our little village in Sicily, and there's even my grandmother travelling with her, changing the place they've got on an arm of a seat with her, dividing a herring out of a basket, for seven days, but cleaning their faces with orange peel before using the cloth:

and in a truck is my brother Rosario who was a partisan up above Vicenza between the heather and the rocks and he is now looking for a bakery where he can work as baker's boy travelling on a truck as I can well imagine him with his knees crushed into his arms and his face held high even in the cold of the journey, never bowed, always serious, always without a word, as I would be, and day in and day out with nothing to pull out of his pocket and put into his mouth:

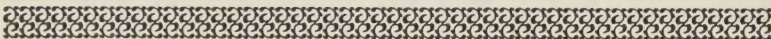
and in the rags of his uniform there's my cousin Gaetano who is with five travelling companions on foot and has now reached the heights of the Amiata above the chalk of Siena and they're trying to get as far as Sicily and at the same time trying to stop somewhere and work:

and the little old man who has been living in trucks or trains for a year and a half, his head is like an old sparrow, with the frightened look of a sparrow and he wears a black rag of a suit and round his neck a muffler in which he wraps his face at night, like a bedouin in the desert, down to his little eyes that never stop trembling even when he's asleep, he has been seen in the trains between

Syracuse and Milan, Syracuse and Venice, Syracuse and Turin, already twenty-six times since April 1945, and everyone who has travelled north and south this year and a half knows him by reputation at least if not personally, with his position as old age pensioner of the railways who is looking for a daughter, going backwards and forwards across Italy, taking a train, getting out of a train, changing trains, he too is of my race, a relative, almost like my mother for me, her brother, the son of my grandmother of a hundred who is travelling with her.

Now the to and fro-ing has began again, as I said, and keeps growing in intensity: no, it isn't decreasing, it's growing: and there doesn't seem any chance of stability. Every day fresh people join the throng going backwards and forwards: new unemployed, new veterans: and few are the old people who've found a place to stop. No-one who has stopped, moreover, has been northwards and southwards less than ten times. And then there were the escaped Fascists and the SS and the Blackshirt Specials from hiding. How many of those who once stopped have since failed to take a train? Too many, I know, have stopped for weariness or rage and in the very desert where the red earth and the rocks under the sun had been mined on both sides, the village seen from the railway cutting was in ruins and the fountain at the outskirts had been waterless for the last two years.

Translated by BERNARD WALL.



Corrado Alvaro

TWO THOUSAND YEARS

THAT'S IT: A VASE THAT MUST BE, AT LEAST, TWO thousand years old. It was fished up in July last year off the island of Montecristo by some fishermen who were casting their nets two hundred metres deep, with no intention of searching for ancient vases. Sometimes deep-sea

fishermen chance on even worse than this when their nets touch the bottom: chunks of pitch or coal or whatever else a ship jettisons in storm or wreck. Their nets may get entangled in sunken ship masts and then they come up torn. But no-one expected to pull up a jar lost two thousand years ago in an antique storm on the changeless sea.

The summer was full of finds of that sort thereabouts. The nets pulled in vases of various shapes, and the fishermen became resigned when they found they could be sold. Some had tense and outstretched arms like women going to a well, or had tiny handles on round bellies, or were shaped like beakers found in ancient tombs. The human figure, which after all has the shape of a jar or pitcher or vase, was reproduced in the queerest ways. Some were chest-shaped or flank-shaped or on the same principle designed in the shape of a heart. Mine is of this last kind, heart-shaped.

I failed to get the one of Phoenician design that looked like a village gossip with hands joined over her head, the one that at a given moment began pouring out a thick dark liquid through a crack. This was a kind of caulker's pitch mixed with resin and beeswax. It was viscous and spread a strong odour in the air. You could smell it leewards for days when least expected and it mingled with the smells of the beach and the little harbour. And so I kept saying to myself: "A port in ancient times must have smelt just like this. This smell mingled with the mast of ships in dock and the baking bread there in the village and the brushwood on the hillside boiling in the sun. It must have spread out to sea like the breath of land. Nothing could be more unexpected than smelling full strength an odour of twenty centuries ago."

Sometimes when I smelt this smell it seemed to take me back through the ages and I was changed in a short breath to a timeless pilgrim. For a few days after my own vase had re-emerged into the world of light and colour I waited for it to distil its pitch. I mean the one shaped like a heart. But it was empty. Perhaps they had thrown it overboard one stormy night to lighten their bark. Perhaps it had gone down with a wreck. The latter was the most probable. It had been in the sea deeps century after century. The waters of many a tempest had gathered over it, destroying much but never this delicate surface of delicate rose-coloured chalk. No end of deposits had accumulated on it: shells, barnacles, spongy growths and coral polyps had formed their labyrinthine galleries

and spread their ramifications. The shells were embedded like the droppings of stalactites. One whole side of the vase formed a great design like the network of veins and arteries you see in illustrations representing the human heart. On the other side where the vase had rested on the sea bed, always the same way up and never dislodged in the abyss, the surface was smooth and clean and you could see the line of the lat that helps the potter when he turns the vessel on his wheel and shapes it with his fingers.

When you listened to your knuckles on it it sounded clear and flawless, it had that full sound you hear so often in villages on fair days round the earthenware stall. It must have contained one of the three elements that speak of simple joy all round the Mediterranean, oil, fresh water or wine. And now it was empty, it was whole but useless. A mere nothing could have smashed it and scattered its shape after twenty centuries. Now it had been restored to life the problem was how to keep it whole. I need not mention the attention, the stupid and absurd care with which it was carried. I kept thinking of the things that have been destroyed, civilisations, cities, nations and wonderful statues and books full of truth. What on earth did this vase count beside them? But, unlike the Colosseum and the Belvedere torso, its shape had remained entire. But it was hard to preserve precisely because it was of no more use, because I couldn't have put oil or water or wine in it. Some things are preserved as long as we use them every day, delicate and indestructible things they are, like some of the beakers that have come down to us from further back than my vase. The problem of conserving these things begins when you no longer employ them.

I felt I could see clearly why all things die when they are no longer useful—and that life is only a using up, a consuming, the fulfilment of a term of service and of history. So civilisations die. And just as a boy's game comes to a sudden stop, so whole nations and empires fall into oblivion and the world that yesterday seemed busy and thronging turns into a dead and forgotten landscape, and the noise of arms and conquests is only a memory, like the sea that one day closed over the shipwrecked vessel off Montecristo.

In the little harbour where I bought the vase that became such an encumbrance I had seen hundreds of others of just the same kind, vases that had remained on the earth's surface until a now

distant time when their shape had lost its meaning and usefulness. Then they had been broken into a thousand fragments and used to build a jetty onto the sea. The uncovered wall of a ruin was kneaded with these shards and you could see pointed bottoms and mouths embedded and pounded into the mediaeval cement. Such shards looked like blood congealed from ancient times. There was a feeling of violence too. I was unable to think of a wall being built with these embedded shards unless I thought of the end of a world and of a civilisation and of all its habits and implements.

That was August last year. September came bringing in the rumours of impending war. You can imagine how events of that sort roused these impressions, various aspects of meditation on the end of things. In that remote corner I could think over a moment of life that was past and gone, the memory of a potter's workshop near a prosperous town, the market resounding with those vases, the crowd, the family treasure of wine, oil and water and cereals preserved in those containers, a life calm and eternal in its moment. And then the morning when the ships put to sea, and these vases were set on board as precious companions of those navigating on the desert face of the waters. And then time with its ceaseless pressure bringing another day with new needs and conquests and unforeseen changes. So that those utensils became pale memories of a different life and those that weren't protected by the abysses of the sea became material for raising a new wall in a new time full of new hope. When September came and the sense of war spread like a fever I remember the bewildered fields and the expectation that lay no longer only in the furrows opened by the plough. Hurriedly we packed to return to town, to get away from the motionless earth that seemed to be turning to us and questioning us like a mother who doesn't know. Slow oxen and swift horses remained as a sign of what, only in the earth, is changeless.

Then suddenly we thought of the vase we had left behind in the locked up house that we thought we might never see again. Perhaps the vase would soon be a pile of shards after its two thousand years of existence. One morning early a workman would be grinding the mortar for his new wall and would use these pieces to fill in a hole. That's the way the world is and the mad rush of years and of civilisation. It would be a lovely morning with the sea unusually turquoise, and there would be nothing audible in the land glistening with dew save the whistling of the mason as he worked, and

the blow of the trowel as it broke up the fragments of the vase, to shape them according to his requirements.

Translated by BERNARD WALL.



Boris Taslitzki

FROM A ROUTE NOTEBOOK

MAUZAC PRISON (October-November 1943): I was the soldier who, on the 10th June, 1940, at Noue Farm, sang the *Marseillaise*, standing in the green corn, facing the enemy who sang *Horst Wessel*. In my cartridge-pouch I had only love-letters and cigarettes.

Of all the men I have known, only those with a deep reason for living have been capable of getting themselves killed.

I underwent the apprenticeship of hate. I wouldn't have believed that it was also a physical sensation.

Six thousand men emptied by dysentery: a noble subject.

I stay whole days without remembering that I am a painter, and than, all of a sudden, I realise that I have been thinking for some moments of a picture, that my glance is fixed on an object which I am analysing with a painter's eye. I think of all we are living through, and that it will be necessary, someday, to explain, express, demonstrate. I'd like, with this accent and enthusiasm of death prowling everywhere and over everything, to show what our two generations are —mine and yours—especially mine, whose magnificent destiny will have been to transform the world. To make it pass from the stage of brutality to that of thought.

To declare that our struggle for bread is the greatest epic and the loveliest poetry in the world. Our aim: to tell the truth which we alone of men have never feared.

Why is reverie called inner analysis?

No doubt they've realised great technical advances. Will they know, as I do, how to see a face by the inner light?

To be an artist it isn't enough to have talent; you've got to have a jaw as well.

What has been hard is to keep on thinking. We could have lived like geraniums, behind bars, as in the backyard of a concierge.

Assure one's future? Only one way: not to be afraid of having your face smashed, to fall in, not for the beefsteak, but in dignity.

We have maintained our love's integrity intact, with a dignity that the poets will sing for ever. And it was a little more difficult than spending a fortnight in the guardroom, and it was a little more difficult than facing shellfire.

We are great enough and rich enough to go on alone and to enter everywhere without payment.

"Jesus fell for the fourteenth time." What a poor little good god. As for us, we've never kept count.

We are the last to draw our creative force from suffering. Tomorrow, men will draw it from joy, and that will be the result of our work. How marvellous. And how well it makes life and death worthwhile.

Oblivion? No, never the crime of *lèse-humanity*.

SAINT-SULPICE CAMP (13th November, 1943): We stole all our laughs and our songs from them. We made silence draw back. How different are the laughs of those who've never felt the weight of compulsory silence. Inside the walls, a checked laugh, it's a struggle, a victory.

To have done one's best is no excuse for keeping quiet. And the satisfaction of a clear conscience is not worth a single small effective action.

I am horribly jealous of those who are fighting on. That is also called love-chagrin.

(December.) I am not the most interesting person I know.

SAINT-SULPICE (1944): It is easy to say there's no truth. It's less easy to prove, with equality of suffering, that it isn't ours.

It isn't gold we love, it's the aureole and the reflection. It's not the stone we admire, but the glittering lights. It's not the pearl we want, but transparency. We don't fight their hate, we struggle for our love.

(*In the cell*: 5-2.) For 27 months I knew no solitude. How full mine is, beyond the cold, the wet, the dark.

If I were capable of regretting the finest things of my life (revolt, struggle, jail, resistance), I wouldn't dare to think of the eyes that I love most in the world.

I've had a splendid life. A luxurious life. Luxury is to be where the blows rain, when human dignity is at stake.

The sound of the voice is seditious.

"My sons, rejoice. For where you stand is honour." A foreign poet? No, Victor Hugo.

(*March.*) "It is urgent to inoculate lyricism and enthusiasm." Thanks, Aragon.

I have borne enough chains and handcuffs to own the right to speak of liberty.

(*April.*) I believe in miracles, those we work ourselves.

(*May the First.*) Over Paris today the sky is blue, and our chestnut-blossoms are white and red. The world knows that my city fights!

Liberty doesn't consist in each man being at home.

BUCHENWALD (*5th August, 1944.*) There is no valuable art except where every trait is an affirmation of human solidarity.

(*October.*) One doesn't give the words one uses or the phrases one forms. Language isn't a gift, it's a pedestal. Thought language is a grandeur whose substance is drawn from contact with the masses. Written language is a pride-generator. The people rediscover their own good.

Nature doesn't supply materials. To get them from her you must tear them away. The masses don't hand over their thoughts. You must tear them away, analyse them, translate them in order to return them.

Princes of the spirit who suffer among us, it is profoundly right that your sufferings equal ours. It is from love of your possibilities that we have fought on, when you opposed to us the empty polish of your scepticism. And now that the élite have changed face, the new aristocracy draws the date and awareness of its birth from our common pain.

(*November.*) So King Solomon, nothing's true. Nothing. Neither your poem nor my pain, even if tomorrow is to be more horrible than today: which won't happen.

Doubt is not a weakness before thought; it's one of the ways it faces towards action. You must take sides to define a thought.

What makes us invincible is precisely the fact that we're men

like others. Supermen would have broken down long ago.

To make use of an ancient theme, to utter contemporary truths, doesn't mean that you have set your form outside time or that you haven't risen to the height of the subject called Eternal.

(*December.*) What I defend is not my skin but "somebody."

Poor fellow: I have never refused myself anything. It's those who have taken away my right of complying with my self-development.

Idealists are boring because they don't know how to do anything which won't be an example that they make a gift of to the world.

(*February 1945.*) On those who think they're so close when they talk in subtilities and don't understand when they touch on the most obvious truths.

(*March.*) If I didn't feel so many creative possibilities, so much movement in unused powers, I'd have no awareness of the halting of my time. If man lacked all creative faculty, he'd lack all sense of time. Give awareness of movement to the rock in the middle of the torrent. . . . That's our position, with the full comprehension that we share in the movement by placing it with our landmark-immobility. The rock has no choice. I perhaps have no more. What then remains is for me to be as firm as it in appearance. But the days will come when, carried off by the waves, the rock will go to crash down the barriers and make the voice of liberated stoicism heard.

I learned here that Jews are born with gold teeth.

The artist owning a strong inner life and social perturbations says of a subject that he detaches its spirit. In fact he delivers only the result of his personal analysis realised through his education and his environment that makes its influence felt even when he is in disharmony with it.

Within the framework of what I believe to be our time's truth, to be a revolutionary is logically to work in the way of socialist realism.

To attempt to think, in my situation, is to gall my heels all night on the slopes of a steep rock and to drive myself to reach the top by the time dawn comes up.

On those who speak in the name of the masses and who, marked by their humanity, mark them in turn with their personalities enriched and strengthened by the greatness of the masses.

Passing through Paris, the Seine twists itself in delight to see the Parisians.

I am born again in painting like a man climbing back into air.
(April.) This evening in our prison we read your lines, Aragon.
Comrades who wouldn't have hushed for Molière and Flaubert
stayed silent to hear your voice. It is the very voice of France.

Before fighting, let us read some poems of sorrow and love.

(8-4.) At some moments we know whether we belong still to
the present or to myth.

I have re-created your face.

(11-4.) We have freed ourselves!

We used to guard ourselves. Now we are guarded in a new way.
(The Americans.)

With full lorries on the autostrade, forward to other battles! At
the top of our voice in the wind, Suzanne, forward, forward!

After 12 years of concentration-camp, you got down illegally
from the lorry, to take up again the illegal struggle, calmly,
heroically, my German comrade. You have lost nothing since you
carry on.

FRANCE (September-October 1945): At present the only place for
reflections is in action.

(July 1946.) There's no conceit in talking about oneself. To talk
only of others is an affectation. Statements made about others only
lead back to oneself, since they are only the product of a self-
analysis made against, with, through, or confronting others.

The stupid opinion, uttered with assurance and accepted without
discussion (without thought), according to which suffering is
necessary to the creation of intellectual and artistic values, is
registered in the circle of ready-made ideas imposed by oppressing
classes on oppressed classes. Misery is not a social necessity.

Anyone who says of a person or a thing that it's beautiful or
ugly utters an opinion which isolates the person or the thing. In
other circumstances, the same person or the same thing would let
loose in him quite different feelings of appreciation. In the first or
second case all these appreciations can serve as the basis for the
definition of the character, the formation, the culture of him who
makes them and equally of him who responds to them.

Beauty: a word, which in all languages makes a part of our
repertory from childhood, but which, expressing nothing precise,
contributes to bring about an extraordinary confusion in all the

accounts attempting to allot the positions of certain æsthetic groundworks.

In the degree to which the represented object leads you to think only of itself there is no creation.

In a portrait, if the expression of the eyes (for instance) fixes only one instant in the life of the eyes, if it doesn't lead you to imagine those eyes in other circumstances, the portrait cannot be a truly human portrait. It is not a portrait at all, it becomes a dummy.

(December.) There are no reasons why a picture with the subject of *The Call of Waziers* should be less well-painted than *The Woman with the Pipe-Head* of God-knows-whom.

(May 1947.) Today everyone claims to be realistic just as everyone calls himself a republican. (Salon of new realities.)

Realism is born from the need to clarify questions and to take part in the struggle to reinforce the solution of social problems which we have to settle. It demonstrates, analyses, reveals, justifies, accuses, creates enthusiasm, anger, joy. It take part, it impels. That's why it is a weapon.

(July.) All the same it's natural to have a navel. It's even right to contemplate it in all simplicity. But it's important to have a just appreciation of distances and a precise sense of perspective. If you lack these two points of knowledge, your navel appears to you bigger than that of anyone else.

A painter sets himself the problem of realising a picture in a certain gamut with the colours of his choice. He halts at some subject or other. A subject is a pretext. He organises his picture from the outset by his gamut, and its completion will be a gamut. Has he in fact posed his problem well or ill? Neither well or ill. He hasn't posed it at all. Neither colour nor form are the beginning and end of everything. But the *Subject* is. On the subject depends the choice of form, organisation, colour, expression. The subject's expression. That is never a pretext but a revelation of the social state of spirit of the creator.

Lack of interest in the subject is the first form of abstraction. If there is no longer a subject, the forms which ought to serve for its expression lack any justification. It is then legitimate to think of their elimination. Abstraction is not "an æsthetic phenomenon," but the product of a reactionary spiritual adventure, with its origin in the abandonment of content.

Abstraction has become modish. Doubtless all the movements of past art have had the same end. Classicism, Romanticism, Verism, Impressionism, Nabism, Fauvism, Cubism and Surrealism, after having had a progressive character, ended as modes. With or without the complicity of their creators. But there has not been enough insistence (in so far as there has been a serious attempt at discussion) on the idealistic character of these movements. They strongly differ from one another. But however much difference there may thus have been in the form, the spirit was constantly impregnated with idealism and the metaphysical taste-for-mystery that ends in the deist idea. Realism alone opposes itself to this spirit. It is constructive and progressive because it draws its substance from materialism.

(January 1948.) All the words are in the song . . . and all the songs are in the everyday words.

Translated from the French by A.L.

WORDS SHOULD DRAW BLOOD

Nine Poems by Julian Tuwim

1. Daily Life

*Phrases grow more fantastic now, and things grow more mysterious.
Speech is harder still, yet silence worse to keep.
Whispers clot in the crannies of my apartment, imperious,
and a chair that starts by a table ends as a tune in sleep.
Each day the everyday word assumes a deeper meaning,
under time's moss the secret first-sense stirs again.
I put my ear to the furniture, I hear strange sighs and moaning,
the oaks for their fatherland lugubriously complain.*

2. Theophany

*You're coming, I feel you near, your giant power,
your lightning-power, a fire afar, gleams red.
My holy goldstrung vision, behold, your hour
dawns, and is near, New Poetry, high ahead.
I have not glimpsed your face, from which will flow*

godgush, the age's hidden meaning clear.
You'll be tremendous, a mystery, I know,
O coming soul, the future's dawn is here.
The dread creative fiat, I Am, your name:
grappling all tyrannous and monstrous themes,
your Advent is a manifesto of flame:
I, the proud queen, come for the mad ones' dreams.

3. The Blackwood Words

*The Blackwood Words upspring and close around.
He whom their portents haunt hears voices blurred:
slowly a subtle change untunes the sound,
till the true sound is heard.
Order from Chaos breaks, Necessity,
the single flash when all the vague and vast
finds of itself the final form, and, free,
cries out its name as last.
Idiot inertia, man's dark senses glower
till the sharp light leaps through them and they're stirred
to clear release by breath of that deep power
within the Blackwood Word.*

4. Gypsies' Bible

*The gypsies' bible? who can utter
its vagrant prophecies yet unwritten?
Silver night whispered to wise-women,
Midsummer-moonlight lent its shimmer.
A crusht and myrtle smell it guards,
star-cabbala and woods loud-tosst,
sepulchral shade, a pack of cards,
a churchdoor-beggar and wan ghost.
Who traced the tome? We scholars; bent,
through memory's lumber groped and sought,
stirred by smell and presentiment,
below the level of sense and thought.*

*Down clefts of knowledge underground,
a burrowing river-maze, the Myth,
not life or death, between is found
and casts its spell for life and death.
And nightly candles here have burned
and tears of wax have blotched the book,
the pages of these dreams are turned
by hazards of illusion, look!
The twinkling lines vibrate. What theme,
the poet's martyrdom, no doubt . . .
fading, a deed he must redeem,
what is it?*

and the book goes out.

5. Words should draw blood

*Your words are parlour-pets on show—
mad dogs are mine!*

*Down with your arabesque burlesquing woe.
Stop fussing over dot and dash. Let go
and give each poem a strong fist.*

Face-smacking songs are fine.

*All your trill-triolets, your sonnet-rules,
tear them to shreds, you fools
who whine.*

*Make callow girls, who dream that love's divine
with flaxen curls outspread,
detest all poetry;*

*and see your words draw blood like axe on head,
words sharply-edged, gold-shining,
words thewed with hungry pouncing energy
like lions, line on line.*

6. To Maria Pawlikowska

*Now, young old-fashioned woman of Cracow, ponder
and pause, the Bishop foams and howls horrendum.*

*For blossoming words through fields of night you wander;
with amber and lavender in strange rites you blend them.
There, adders-tongue and bellebore you brew
in clear moonwater drawn from wordroot-springs.
The Cracow Synod's got its eye on you
and through the land the scandal rings.
From essences in rose and violet hidden
acacia-words and hyacinth-words you raise.
What books of secret lore, what tomes forbidden
unclasped their incantations to your gaze?
What's this sweet whisper of virtuosos verses
that makes the pious peasants blench?
Inquisitors will watch you burn with curses,
quia es venefica et striga, wench.
Now devilmoths your confidants afield
bring honey charmed from flowers; and bright with spells
love-potions, simmering with venoms, yield
in poems, as in glass-retorts, rich smells.*

7. Epos

*Maybe that's mirabells ringing there
or miramaids chasing through the air;
through old fir-places and gorges races
the terrible horse, the maddened mare.
A sickle of gold has reaped the skies,
magimeres sparkle deep with eyes,
flutterlings rustle, night-shadowlets bustle,
and herbs are dancing with jostling sighs.
A shadowy hunter winds his horn,
a black-and-white calf calls back, newborn,
come shaggily out with blood on the grasses
to stare at the horned moon as she passes.
The sacred beast will savagely cry,
with the ages loosed in the stormy sky.*

*Ho, Father Bull, I hear you roar,
and the zodiac-beasts neigh a star-reply.*

8. Request for a Song

*If, Lord, your splendid gift the Word I truly hold,
let wrath of oceans pulse my spirit in full flood
and raise me simple and noble like the poets of old
to strike the great and tyrannous with my stormy blood.
Breathe into me no hymns; for hymns will yield no grace
to wretched men whose caved-in ribs and dirty shirts
hide empty hearts, who cry for crumbs of bread and chase
after the band which with a king's tattoo diverts.
But lend my anger a bright and sharpening strength of steel,
bravura, fantasy, and rhymes that can't go wrong,
that all the men I shoot-at in their skulls may feel
the bullets of my quick sixshooter glittering song.*

9. Now clench your teeth

*Now clench your teeth, your hands, and under
a furrowing anger face the world,
march on against the high mad wind
that bangs your face and pounds the world
with rebel-drums that tightly thunder.
The straight road of the lonely one:
the great unslackening tempest-yell.
Terrible God, whose clangours stun
shaking his evil fist where stormclouds run.
We two in endless wrangling pang
with love are blowing up the world:
Hands of revenge go wild above,
and star-hail of his eyes as well.
There, toppling down with head of flame,
that's he, that's he, the thunderbolt;
and if you hear a scream, that's I,
the glorious cry of man's revolt.*

Translated from the Polish by JACK LINDSAY.

Effendi Kapiev

THE POET

I. Autumn: The First Recollection

MY QUEST FOR THE SOURCE OF THE POET'S INSPIRATION begins in the autumn, the classic time for poetry. Memories carry me to a distant place. Brightness fades from the gardens. Late autumn holds the earth. Red and yellow leaves flutter down to greet me, and beyond, almost lost in the leaves, Suleiman sits on the waste ground before his house.

The waste ground is rank with orach and thistle. On its right, down a steep slope, stretch the gardens. Suleiman sits in oriental fashion, leaning against an old wooden plough abandoned here long ago. Some way off, ravens strut on the stony road. Further, the village stands up like a fort with many towers. Suleiman's head is sunk on his breast. Faded autumn leaves whirl above him, lightly falling on his shoulders.

Here then he is, the poet, I say to myself. Am I perhaps at the gates of the mystery? I watch the birth of a song. Fall of the leaf, and gardens withering. Do they remind him of age? Grey-blue mists gather in the hollows. Are they maybe wraith of the earth's memory of spring? The trees stand as though plunged deep in a tranquil lake. The last joys of summer fly away on glittering gossamer and the mere foretaste of winter robs them of all weight. What could be a poet's thoughts at such a moment? The vanity of human life, or the grandeur of death?

Ah, Suleiman is simply asleep.

From this waste ground the near hill is open to the view. There in the full glare of the sun two workers have been tiling the school roof since dawn. The poet watched them for want of anything else to do before he dozed. Now he sits bent, with head sunk low on his breast. The ravens, unafraid, strut near him on the stony road. They sway a little, as though their whole weight is in their tails.

Suleiman sleeps, never letting go the staff which he grips with two fingers. The gentle autumn breeze stirs his grey hair and the grass-tuft growing from the log.

How crystal is the sky, and how bright the sun.

Everything round him is soaked with light. Leaves strew the road, and the tall hazels in the copse at the climb to the village are softly rustling. Their rustling deepens the solitude, it seems as though everyone and everything died long ago and there's no sign of life in the village, and the two men busy on the distant roof have come from some other world to begin life all over again. Poet, death is here in the autumn's yellow radiance. I feel the leaves are dying, the grass is dying. How can a man grow used to this? *Death, death*, the leaves rustle: do you hear?

Suleiman sleeps, with a slight snuffle. His sheepskin cap has slipped over his forehead, his lower lip droops. The hazel-shadows slant across the waste and vanish past the slope. The trees are close at hand. Most likely the place where the poet sits was once the point where several gardens met.

I wait for him to waken. Horse-hooves clatter afar, and I look round.

A woman leading a saddled horse appears at the further end of the path coming down from the village. A small barefoot boy with tear-blotched face trots after her, clinging to her skirt. As they approach, the ravens are at once on the alert, seem to rise on tiptoe, and skim across the waste to settle in the hazel boughs. The woman looks anxious with her bent head. She takes the shortest track that runs past the road to the spring. The horse picks his way cautiously, flickering nervous ears, slipping now and then on the steep way.

Suleiman starts. I don't know exactly when he opened eyes, but the next moment he is sitting upright, looking straight ahead, as calmly as ever. The road before him winds through the orchards and dwindles into the distance. It seems all ploughed up, with gravel heaps at the side for road-making.

The woman coasts the hazel bushes and is suddenly lost in the ravine, then she reappears below on the path before Suleiman. Now I can hear the small boy's whimper as he trots beside her, and the metal clanking in the saddlebags. "Why don't you let the boy ride the horse." Suleiman suddenly asks in the tones of someone in the midst of a long conversation. He yawns, pushes the

heavy sheepskin cap on to the side of his head. His forehead is wet with sweat.

The woman stands looking round. Halting the horse, she hastily settles the shawl that has slipped back and stares round.

"I am here," says Suleiman, raising his staff with the bent end upwards. He is sitting on higher ground and can hardly be seen through the weeds from below.

An abrupt change comes over the woman's face, and her dark arched brows give a twitch. "It's the Yenikent midwife's horse," she informs him with delight. "Mahomed has a son."

"Oho," Suleiman remarks, rousing himself. "Not so bad. And where are the people?"

"They haven't come back from work yet," she tells him excitedly. "Some are working in the orchards, some on the road. A boy was sent long ago to fetch Mahomed, but there's no sign of him yet. I really don't know what to do . . ."

"But it's a long way," Suleiman quietly interrupts her, and, leaning on his staff, rises to his feet. "I suppose you think it's quite near. You've forgotten they've begun to mend the road from the bridge. Aye, you!" With an habitual gesture he arranges the coat thrown round his shoulders, and takes a few steps towards the woman. His eyes still have the shining of sleep. "Well, and has everything gone all right?"

Shyly the woman lays her hand on the boy's shoulder. He stands in front of her, looking up awestruck at Suleiman. "Yes, everything's all right," she says. "I'm just going to water the horse. The midwife's getting ready to go."

Suleiman laughs. "As though Mahomed would let her go without pilau. This is a great occasion. Go and take the horse to the water, then to his stall, and give him a rest, eh?"

While he speaks, he thrusts his arms into his coat-sleeves. The woman smiles respectfully, the gleam of white teeth is seen even from a distance. She lingers a moment, then sees that Suleiman has ended the conversation, and goes on.

"Hey, hey!" he calls after her, but without a glance, for he is squinting at the burrs on his sleeve, "I'm not joking. Do as I said."

Then he stands a long while staring at the hill. The woman's gone. His gaze is fixed on the spot between the trees where the newly-tiled school roof glows rosily in the sun. The workers, one

on the ridge and one on the cornice-edge, are smoking pipes. Suleiman considers them for a few moments, then takes a cigarette from his breastpocket and lights up too. Lights without haste.

Moving softly over the grass in his new goat-hide shoes, he goes without haste through the waste ground towards the roadside hazels. Now his face is grave. He pauses a moment, then moves on again. After a while he throws away his stub, crushes it under his heel, and pauses by the roadway. The hand with the staff is drawn back, the other is pressed on his breast. Overhead the century-old hazels whisper with autumn in their branches, and their sound is like the surging of the sea. The leaves fall circling and trembling at the old man's feet.

But now he starts and lifts his head. And at the same moment I am also on the watch. From beyond the orchards comes the thud of horse-hooves, and a rider is suddenly seen tempestuous on the road. Behind him a white wall of dust blurs away the orchards. He rides bareback, holding his cap with his right hand. His head is thrown back, his shirt bellies in the wind.

Then he catches sight of Suleiman and whips off his cap, and the dark rounded face looks still more youthful. "Egoi, Suleiman!" he calls, sharply pulling his horse up. "Tell me to do anything you like, and I'll do it." He passes his sleeve over his hot face and gives a breathless laugh. The horse rears.

At that moment the woman leading the horse comes up over the gulley edge. "Mahomed," she cries. "Do I get a gift?"

"Of course, Gulshara, of course," the rider shouts, straightening up and waving his cap. "Not one gift but a whole houseful."

Suleiman still stands deep in thought. The woman moves more quickly, and, taking the whimpering child's hand, comes closer to the copse. The rider glances from her to Suleiman, and as Suleiman is standing still with bent head, he puts his cap on and also waits in silence.

"Listen," Suleiman says at last, rousing himself. He takes the horse by the bridle and looks at the rider with dignity. "You'll call your son Maxim, won't you? I had a friend in Moscow called Maxim . . . Maxim Gorky . . ."

"As you wish," the young man replies, at once serious.

"You'll call your son Maxim and invite everybody to the celebration—me, the midwife, and those workers over there . . . Understand?"

"Just as you wish, Suleiman."

"Besides, Maxim means wise in parsee, you know."

The rider leans forward, and instead of speaking embraces Suleiman and kisses him on the brow.

"Well, how's the road?" Suleiman asks in a more cheerful voice.

The rider replies with obvious satisfaction that the bridge has been already passed and that from there to Derbent the highway is finished; all that remain is on this side.

"Ah, is that so?" Suleiman says. "Bear in mind that the village square should be here." He points to the waste ground with his staff. "The highway will pass there and then go straight on. . . . Well now, you'll have to be off. . . . But wait a moment there."

He bars the horse's way with his staff, then takes a couple of strides to the small boy, and swings him up into the saddle.

"I told you, Gulshara," he says, glancing round at the woman, "That wasn't the right way to do things. The boy should ride the horse. That's why he's a boy."

The horse quivers and raises his head. Suleiman sets the small dusty feet in the stirrups, then with faint smile steps back and surveys the child.

"There, now," he concludes proudly, "now we're off. A regular hero, eh? And mind you, if there's a war, you've got to throw yourself first at the enemy, and we'll come after you, do you see?"

He goes back to his old place by the tree, and with the air of a host farewelling his guest he watches the couple go. The rider, laughing softly to himself, makes way for the woman. The boy keeps his seat in the saddle, clinging with both hands to the bow. The man's horse, still heated with the gallop, restlessly paws the ground.

"Maxim," the rider repeats in a tone of admiration as he takes leave of the poet. "Thanks, Suleiman, that was a good thought of yours."

Suleiman nods, and the tears come into his eyes. "You must be going now," he whispers. "Good luck."

Puzzled, the rider still lingers. "What's wrong, neighbour?"

"Go away," Suleiman shouts, giving the ground a sudden angry thump with his staff. "I'll have time to laugh later on . . . I am going to name the child, eh? What do you think? I'll take him in my arms like this and whisper three times in his ear: Wise Maxim, my friend Maxim, welcome . . ." He breaks off, makes a gesture

of dismissal with tears streaming down his face. He wipes them off with his knuckles. "Ah, my boy," he murmurs. "Autumn is here . . ."

Then he stands alone, his head bent in reverie, staring ahead.

The light autumn breeze ruffles the fur of his big cap and mutters in the fallen leaves. The rider and the woman leading the horse recede more and more, going higher up. The rider is talking to the small boy, who sits leaning forward, swaying in the saddle. At that moment a hollow murmur swells from somewhere far beyond the gardens. The men on the school roof stop work to stare down at the road, where a large crowd seems coming with songs and music. The noise swells.

"Egoi, Suleiman!" the rider shouts. "Here's my brigade rushing to congratulate me on my firstborn. Can you hear? Oho, ho!" He waves his cap.

Suleiman draws himself up out of his musing, and looks back. The noise is coming nearer. Multiplied by the orchard-echoes, it spreads and grows many-voiced. The gardens swarm with life. The old stillness is gone. *Life, life*, the leaves whisper to me. The startled flock of ravens circles over the gardens. Above in the village, women come out one after another on the rooftops and look down into the orchards. The zurnas and the roll of the drums are heard.

Suleiman crosses the road towards his house and notices his wife who has been waiting for some time at the gate. Shading her eyes with her slim dark hand, under which only her prominent chin can be seen, she is looking at him against the sun. A coral ornament glows on her bosom against the dark dress. Suleiman goes slowly towards her.

"What has happened?" the old woman asks.

"Haven't you heard?" he exclaims in surprise. "A son is born to Mohamed."

II. Summer: The Second Recollection

A deluge has burst on the orchards and gardens. It tosses and shakes the trees, and the whole world is engulfed in its sweeping furious rhythm. Myriads of strings, it seems, are drawn between earth and sky. The roar and slash of rain beats against the houses. The drops fall with a metal heaviness, tearing the unripe fruit from the trees into the mud. The streets are impassible with black

ragged torrents. And the torrents wash under the stone-heaps and carry them off with a clatter. They rush down in cascades, and their crests are yellow with clay, a boiling foam. Down the roadside ditches float ruined birdnests, dead mice, straw and tufts of nettles.

Everything within sight is torn up and stunned.

The backs of leaves are showing as in a hurricane. Thick streams of water pour down the trunks and make them seem alive, quivering like jelly. The gutters are brim-high, and the bubbles dance and swirl like the clash of rumbling tambourines. From time to time the gutter-edges fall in and crumble, and there is a momentary glimpse of the blue-grey earth, dry and filmed as though with cobweb: then it is beaten down with the drops.

Overhead the water whirls. The lightning-flashes seem immediately overhead and are almost smothered up in the smoky rain-mist. Between earth and sky myriads of strings are drawn, and on them the downpour plays a threatening thundrous cantata.

I ride into the village. Soaked to the skin, I stand knocking at Suleiman's door, but no one answers. At the back of the verandah, where the wetted sunflowers sway under the rain, I make out a bed. Over it a thin cheesecloth curtain is spread against flies, and the bed is not made. Suleiman's shoes stand under it. Through the gauzy curtain I fancy that I see his grey head on the pillow. Probably he is curled up asleep, for the red quilt rises and subsides regularly in the middle of the bed.

I know how pleasant is sleep when rain is falling. The leisurely peppermint coolness which runs through you blows and sucks your soul into a dim oblivion, the happiness of being close to nature, and the awareness of your sheltered loneliness—everyone knows these feelings from childhood. I sit down on the low three-legged stool by the door and wait for the poet's awakening.

Gradually the rain is lessening. The drops fall with a lighter sound, not so big as they were, and the yellow distances emerge though the thinning veil of the rain.

This then is the poet, I say to myself. Am I perhaps at the gate of the poet's mystery? All round him are the windswept gardens. Tossed by the summer rainstorm, O surely they remind him of his childhood? The trees bristle with their armour of leaves. A joyous green radiance emanates from them. Under, the soil swells. Streams of water run gleaming out from the trunks. There's a smell of savoury mint and wet bark. As though trembling

with rapture, the sunflowers offer their bowed necks to the raindrops. The air is swept by waves of watery particles like white phantoms. O, child now, what can be purer than childhood memories? And this dream, conjured up by the sound of rain with memories that crowd and merge together, this poet's dream: surely it's here that the song begins.

So I muse, seated on the low three-legged stool of carved wood, glancing every now and then at the sleeping Suleiman, or staring straight ahead into the yard. Caught by the wind, the frail cheesecloth billows over the old man. The blanket-edge is damp with rain. But now the rain is passing, and patches of deep blue show up here and there among the clouds. No, the sky is not deep blue, it is a clear light blue in the mountains after rain, and you see it as a flat surface. When the clouds, unfurling and smudging, disperse at last, in their interstices shines a depthless azure so fresh and joyful that you catch your breath with the sheer surprise of it. The clouds drift away, but the azure remains, pure and untouched. Then all of a sudden the rain grows tame. It's all been only a joke, a bit of childish mischief—and so let life go on.

The sun is still hidden, but on the far green slopes lie vivid golden squares of light. The beams slip downward and the earth flashes out a new sparkle of response. They glide nearer and nearer, and suddenly they're close on the neighbouring slope. From the curling garden-greenery that glints in the brilliance there rises a white smoke. The beams break out from behind the clouds in a broad golden sheaf, and with them a blessing falls on the earth.

Then the roar of the torrents can be distinguished; they're still racing through the streets and crossing the mountain-tracks. The noise is monotonous, emphasising the stillness, like the roar of a train that has just passed, and you still stand watching it.

Drops fall from the trees and leave tiny pits dimpling the soil. The gardens and orchards are still under the storm-spell. The verandah-walls near to the cheesecloth curtain are dappled with tremulous light. The porous stone steps are smoothly gleaming. Suleiman is still asleep.

I hear the cocks crowing in the yard. The thunder is over. A cock stands on the brink of a bright rainpool, with his red and green plumage reflected. When he has crowed, he listens for a moment, as if to say: Did that go off all right? And then he struts away, uttering a smug approval in his rooster-language. A yellowish dog, lame and wet, comes out from somewhere and laps the

water, baring his teeth at it. Across the yard a tall stately gander and family move in procession towards the gate. Life awakens in the orchards. The birds perch on the branches.

A minute goes by. Each bird tries out his note. It's like the musicians tuning up in an orchestra. Slowly the birdnotes weave into harmony. The confusion of sounds blends into a triumphal choir. The silence is ended. Music floats in on me from every side, and now no one could tell the nightingale's flute from the woodpecker's drum. The beetles hum, the grasshoppers chirrup, the silvery trill of the lark hangs in the air like a bellnote, the bees are loud, the sparrows twitter, and the many-voiced orchestra is conducted by the oriole. He perches on the near roof and taps his long beak on the cornice.

The music broadens, floats over the earth, everything merging now in one mighty symphony of life. It swells, and I sit deafened, uncomprehending, as it surges on, this symphony, lifting in a crescendo before the final chords.

Boom!

I jumped. The chord is struck, and at the same moment Suleiman appears in the gateway as though in a film.

He's barefoot. His legs are bare to the knees, and the mud is up to his ankles, making his feet look oddly rounded like camel-hooves. He's laughing as he comes through with spade on shoulder, wet to the skin and answering someone with a joke. Next minute his wife follows. With downcast eyes she picks her way carefully. Over her head is an empty sack, cornerwise, sopping and reaching down her back to the waist.

"Ho, old woman, you're a champion, you are," Suleiman says with a laugh as he puts his spade down. "I'm sure I never thought you could run so fast. Anyone'd think you were a mountain-goat."

He cleans the mud off his feet with the spade, straightens his back, and shakes with laughter. The old woman, still without a word, goes slowly past. Then a white cat, hearing the master's voice, leaps off the bed from under the cheesecloth curtains. She it was who lay curled up on the pillow. She stretches and yawns, passing me with lifted tail.

"You're always like that," the old woman says boldly, turning on Suleiman. She flushes and pulls the sack from her head. I'd swear she's kept it on till now, so that she may pull it off angrily as soon as she feels at home. "You're always like that. If I say white, of

course you say black. It's an old trick of yours."

"No, wait a moment," Suleiman protests, "What I'm saying is half and half, half white, half black."

His moustache bristles as he tries to control his laughter by staring into the distance with head thrown back. And there, spanning the earth with one end in the clouds and the other on the steep green slope, a rainbow shines. The rain rides away beneath, like cavalry with slanting lances. Far, far away are the mountaintops with snows glisening in the sun. They too are framed by the rainbow, and the slanted lances of the retreating rain cut across them.

Suleiman stands in a pool of clear rainwater out of which the grassblades stick up, reflected dark and twisted against the blue of the mirrored sky. Finding no words, the old woman looks at the man in silence. She heaves a deep sigh. Suleiman hops about in the pool, scrubbing one foot with the other and pretending not to notice her. His deputy's badge gleams red on his chest.

A tractor passes down the street. It too appears in the gateway as if in a film-shot. It tows two traps, coupled like railway carriages and loaded with people. Among the crowd—mostly in red—in the front trap, women are standing, and in the second, men with sheepskin caps. They all carry spades and are returning home to the village from the river where the water power-station is being built. The tractor splashes as it passes, and the women cling to one another at the jolts and give merry laughs.

"Look," the old woman says, pointing through the gate, "all the people are laughing at you. I told you it was going to rain, Suleiman, and not to go meddling in the engineer's business, and there, you see."

Suleiman squats down to wash the toes of his right foot. The spade sticks up beside him. For a while he watches with narrowed eyes the passing procession. Then when it's out of sight he suddenly jumps up. From his outstretched fingers the water drips back into the pool. "The grass that the snake hates is found by its hole," he says, paling a little. "Eh, old woman?"

Dumbfounded, she goes for some reason into the back of the yard, to the shed there. Suleiman watches her with narrowed lids. The white cat sits with back to me on the doorstep that the sun has now dried. She licks her paws with her pink tongue and waits for her master and mistress, holding her paw across her chest the way a patient carries an injured arm in a sling. At Suleiman's call

she raises her head. The singing gardens around us are many-voiced as an organ. The rainbow spans the mountains. Already children are calling to one another in the street.

How pleasant, how blessed is the world now after the thunder-storm has passed by.

In a minute or two the old woman comes out of the shed, carrying a handful of eggs, for an omelette, and goes towards the house. At the foot of the steps she pauses, tucking a wisp of grey hair behind her ear and frowning at Suleiman. He still stands by the pool and has clearly forgotten his anger. His underlip protrudes as he takes a cigarette-packet from his breast-pocket and finds it hopelessly spoilt by the rain.

These two stories from The Poet by the Daghestan writer, Kapiev, based on the old folk-bard, Suleiman Stalsky, are translated from the Russian by HILDA KAJANINA and P.M.

FOUR SONNETS *Randall Swingler*

I

*On the hither bank of battle
He made a deal with Death, to take away
The aching pack of Fear; should he gainsay
All hope, all expectation, all regret.
Death signed, and kept his pledge.
The Soldier laughed and sang in the sweat of hell,
And by sheer accident defaulted on his debt,
Emerged bewildered on life's further edge.
Haunted, returning to the source of hate,
He kicks the dust of ruin which he made
But finds no key; and is not justified.
He owes a debt to death and has not paid.
How will he ever expiate
The guilt of being alive?*

*Ah yes, he will be captain of his soul
 All right, a dark prince taking no counsel,
 But traversing all day the long routine
 Of empty chambers in his heart's domain:
 Walking, walking, with no one at his side
 But the inept sound always following
 Of someone hurrying to overtake,
 Whose hand is always about to fall on his shoulder,
 In this narrow passage between enormous dooms.
 This is all so familiar that only now
 When he is at last alone, the query grows
 Curling maternal like a fern in his mind:
 Why is there no one with authority
 To show him that he has not sinned?*

*Because he does not hope to turn again
 But has accepted that voluptuous sin
 Which inspissates the world and seals him in
 The ornamental garden of his pain:
 Because the mirror is his magic lake
 Which hides the subtle sword between the eyes
 And parts the watcher from his loved disease
 To hoard division's for the mystery sake:
 The slow light filtered through the walls of skir
 Like sunset on the desert, liquifies
 Distance and Time; and conjures him to feign
 Mesmeric sleep from which he need not wake.
 The hope of life will cease to aggravate
 Or death to taunt this beggar at his gate.*

*Glassy image of death, the mirror-white swan
 Slides on the rugose water whose colour is fire.
 The reedy swords of circumstance are still as time
 And the long banks covertly leading the eye
 Are only guides into an infinity of light.
 Death of day melts the points of division,
 Even the distinctions of love. The perplexed planets
 Of human experience swim together and the grassy nerves
 Wear each their sheath of comfortable shadow.
 Oh is it only melting and disintegration
 Can so disarm the caution of the heart
 As to release the impassive swan-like image
 To move without motive beyond and in the boundless
 Orbit of an unresisting world?*

Angus Wilson

REX IMPERATOR

THE WINTER SUN POURED IN THROUGH THE LONG French windows of the dining-room. Flames shot up from the burning logs in the hall. In the morning room the coals glowed brightly. But neither sun nor burning wood nor glowing coals could make the house less desolate. Sometimes it seemed that there were too many windows, too much bleak light; at others the house seemed perpetually sombre and dark. But always it was desolate and, above all, expectant. For years now there had been this sense of impending tragedy; the occupants were like passengers in a Railway Waiting Room, idly chattering and frittering away the time. How could they do or say anything positive, for though the crash might be delayed, it

would inevitably arrive. To Rex Palmer and his wife, the house was their beloved home and what they feared was disaster, bankruptcy, ruin; but to the family dependants it was a prison against which they chafed, and to which they yet clung for fear of being turned adrift, of having to fend for themselves. They were like parasites washed up by the tide, hanging like limpets to the rock, hating and loathing it, yet waxing fat upon it, devitalising the air they breathed.

It should have been a prosperous household, for Rex was partner in a well-established firm. To his wife Brenda it was still a source of pride and happiness; though of late even she had begun to feel a strange hopelessness, a fear that Rex could not contrive to pay out for ever to people who would not help themselves. On a morning like this when the boys had only just returned to school, she had to double the energy she put into her housework in order to avoid depression. To their family dependants the situation was becoming hateful; they had all three been there some months now—a longer period than they had ever known without Rex fulfilling their demands for money—money which they had almost persuaded themselves was their rightful due, money which would allow them to return for a space to London and reign supreme in their own small worlds. They had eaten away at the foundations until the crumbling edifice shook so that even *they* were afraid—supposing Rex were to get into Queer Street, what would become of them? Yet they were all agreed that it was only his absurd obstinacy that was at fault—this refusal to sell land because of some promise to his sons—things were far too immediate for that sort of sentimental consideration. They had begun to hate the hand that fed them, the more so that they could not afford to bit it too hard. Rex they could despise; after all he chose to run the family finances, it was his fault if there were deficits, besides his temper and domineering ways cancelled all need for gratitude. But for Brenda there was nothing left but hatred, she ignored them so completely, made it so clear that they were there by Rex's grace not hers. Her courtesy was impassive, withdrawn, it was quite intolerable, it almost made them feel guilty.

In so uncongenial an atmosphere it was not surprising that they clung tenaciously to the outside world, awaited the morning postal delivery with such eagerness, though letters came less frequently as the months passed by. But this morning each of them expected not

just "letters," but a letter. Brenda's father, Mr. Nicholson, like the brave old sportsman he was, had risked on a horse what little cash he still had from Rex's last loan and had won. It looked as though his luck had changed at last, and he thought lovingly of the thirty quid that was coming, to have a few crisp fivers in his pocket would make him feel a man again. Gwen Rutherford, Rex's sister, was awaiting her alimony. But it was not only the money she expected; after ten years' separation she still believed in that letter from Hugh, that humble, apologetic letter asking her to return; and, now that rumour declared him to have left that common little woman, she felt sure that it would come. Rex's brother Basil could hardly expect any actual cash by post, he had long since dried up all sources of financial aid. His sharp eyes however had seen that Rex was wavering over the land sale, soon he would get his money and be free to leave. He had written to a girl in town to put him up—no use in wasting good money on rooms—besides he was sick and tired of the local women, it would be nice to have someone a bit more sophisticated. And now the post was late. They all felt it was really trying them a little *too high*.

If I have to stay in this blasted country many days more I shall scream, thought Gwen, as the cawing of the rooks circling over the nearby copse reminded her of her remoteness from town. She found Brenda's busy attention to housework more than usually irritating this morning. Not that she was troubled by any conscientious feeling that she should lend assistance; but years of hotel life had allowed her to regard her futile inactivity as a normal pattern of behaviour, and she had a vague resentment against her sister-in-law for underlining her superfluous position in the household. "I have never known any house" she used to say "and I've lived in a good many"—it was true that there were few boarding houses or private hotels that had not at one time received her—"where there's so much fuss as this one. Of course, the trouble is Brenda has no *method*." She was about to make some criticism of this kind as she passed through the hall where Brenda was busily buffeting cushions into shape, but she contented herself with a snort. "The postal delivery is late again" she barked. "Yes it is, isn't it?" replied Brenda vaguely, and as Gwen's broad behind in its tight black cloth skirt disappeared upstairs, she called "You'll find a fire in the morning room, dear."

Upstairs in the drawing room rebellion was in full swing. Old Mr. Nicholson moved aside the screen with its lotus flowers of beaten copper and put a match to the fire. "All the damned fires in this house smoke" he said "I told old Rex at the time that the architect didn't know his business." Gwen Rutherford did not reply, she was too busy settling herself on the sofa. It was a process acquired through years of competition for the best chairs in private hotel lounges and it took time. First a place had to be found for Boy, her white West Highland terrier, then there was her own ample body to be spread, next she had to put out on the seat beside her a jade cigarette holder, a shagreen cigarette case, her knitting and her Boot's library book; she would also have liked the newspaper, but Mr. Nicholson had taken that. She sat bolt upright with her large bust and her short thick arms held defiantly forward. Her fat face with its bulging eyes was blotched from an overhasty make up, the lines of her plump cheeks ran in a deep sulk at each side of her small pouting mouth. She looked like the British Bulldog at bay rather than a once beautiful woman soured by seven years of legal separation. Long after most women had grown their hair again, Gwen had retained her peroxide shingle and the rolls of blue stubbled fat at the back of her neck added to the bulldog illusion.

"I know Brenda won't like us using the drawing room in the morning, but I really cannot sit in that depressing morning room," said Gwen, she enumerated each syllable very distinctly in a hard clear voice as though she was being put through a vowel test, though her sentences ended in a whine of self pity, "Why Rex should have chosen the only room that gets no sun for the morning room I do *not* understand."

"The room would be all right if it had anything like a comfortable seat in it," said Mr. Nicholson as he sank into a deep armchair, dropping cigar ash on one side of him, allowing the newspaper to disintegrate on the other "Poor old Rex, he's got no sense of comfort, and Brenda's the same, she gets it from her mother, certainly not from me" he chuckled and his small black eyes twinkled with the schoolboy dishonesty that at seventy still disarmed so many hearts and secured so many loans.

Gwen only made a grimacing smile. She disliked and distrusted Mr. Nicholson, and though immediate interests placed them in alliance, she was not prepared to commit herself too far.

Her younger brother Basil stretched out his legs and rested his muddy shoes on the mauve shot-silk cover of another chair. It gave him great pleasure to violate Brenda's beloved drawing room, it was, he felt, almost an æsthetic duty. The winter sun showed up its faded, pastel shabbiness, but its pristine glory must have been almost worse. As a man with an alpha brain and a hard head into the bargain he was able to savour to the full its third-rate pretension. His blood shot blue eyes and his india-rubber features were blurred with amused contempt—the Medici prints, the little silver bowls, the mauve net curtains, the shot-silk covers, the beaten copperware, the chinese lanterns and honesty in pewter mugs—it was all so pathetically genteel and arty. He did not stare long at the room, the light hurt his eyes. He always had a hangover in the mornings now, was always a bit beer sozzled. He would not have got up so early if he hadn't expected that bloody letter, and now the ruddy post was late. Shutting his eyes, he said "Up the rebels. Workers arise. We *are* in revolution this morning aren't we?" Gwen did not reply. She was always at sea with her brother's open cynicism, though she still believed, or liked to believe, that at thirty-three he would yet startle the world with his brilliance.

Mr. Nicholson did not favour cynicism, indeed sentimental worldliness was his strong suit, but he staked his all on possessing a sense of humour and if an honest Dick Turpin life was called for, he would not refuse it.

"The trouble with us dishonest people, Palmer" he said, "is that we don't know how to be close. Now old Rex is successful because, breathe it not in Gath, he's mean with the shekels. Brenda's the same. That's why they've got money, of course. It always amuses me when old Rex complains of being hard up. Why! they must have a mint of money saved the way they live." It was an unwritten law of the vultures that none of them should ever openly admit to knowing where their victims' money went. "It's beyond me, of course," he went on, "why the hell people should want to save their money up for other people to spend when they're growing daises. Solomon was a very wise old bird when he said 'A short life and a merry one' or words to that effect. With all my vices I can safely say I've never been mean. My trouble was to stop myself giving it away when I had it. Funny thing I was only thinking this morning of a little Scots girl I lived with—oh way back before you were thought of, in the 'nineties"

he bowed old world apology to Gwen for his reference to his mistress, and she smiled back her broadminded permission "pretty little kid she was, but tough like all Glasweegians. 'Put your money away, Jim,' she said, 'and don't go giving it to Tom, Dick and Harry. They'll no thank ye for it, when ye ha'e none' and she was perfectly right. The only chap who helped me when I was down was poor little Billie Dean, the best lightweight England ever had, and he didn't owe me a sausage. 'Here's a fiver for you, Jimmie, don't say no,' he said, 'You were the only gent of them all who was willing to know me after I got too old for the ring.' Poor little blighter, I was always glad I took it, he died a week later with cancer of the throat." Mr. Nicholson's voice boomed on in sentimental reminiscence. Mrs. Rutherford talked in an undertone to Boy, "He likes to sit on the sofa, doesn't he?" she said, "even if his Auntie Brenda is nasty and fussy about it." Basil dozed off in a half sleep, his mouth slightly open, he finished an obscene limerick in Ausonian Latin and thought should he make the dancing instructress at the Tivoli before he borrowed a fiver from her or should he borrow the fiver first and then take her out with it and make her afterwards.

When Mr. Nicholson came to a long pause in his reminiscence, Gwen seized her opportunity to talk. The last six or seven years of her life had been so completely blank that she had nothing really to say, so she always talked of her own immediate movements, making up by clarity of diction for the lack of content.

"At the quarter past eleven" she said, "I shall go down to the town for coffee. If you want to come with me, Basil, I shall be ready at a quarter past eleven. I shall have to change my library book, this last novel they gave me is really very dull, so that I shall want to look in at Boot's. If Brenda wants me to do any shopping I think I shall do it after coffee, because the Jonquil gets so crowded. In any case, I shall look in at the Post Office to complain about the lateness of the post. If Brenda and Rex won't say anything, I shall have to. But I shall use their name. 'If it goes on,' I shall say, 'Mr. and Mrs. Palmer will take it up with the Post Office Headquarters.' It's only really a question of frightening them. . . ." While his sister was talking, Basil went to sleep, and before she had finished, Mr. Nicholson was openly reading the newspaper. "I hope we shan't sit up late, because I expect I shall be very tired tonight, I did *not* sleep well last night." Gwen's

mouth snapped tight as she came to the end of her prospectus of the day, then she threw away her cigarette, gathered up her belongings, and followed by Boy she left the room.

Brenda was bending over the sofa in the hall straightening the cushions, so that she almost fell over Gwen's little dog when it ran straight between her feet. Recovering her balance, she trod on its tail. It let out a yell of pain and began to emit high, staccato barks.

"Poor Boy" said Gwen, "your auntie Brenda's so busy she never saw a poor little dog," and she kissed its black nose, but Roy refused to be soothed. "I'm so sorry," mumbled Brenda, but she looked at the trail of paw marks on the carefully polished parquet floor. Gwen followed her gaze, "You really ought not to use such slippery floor polish, Brenda," she remarked, "someone will break their neck one of these days." Brenda thought of so much she would like to say, but she only replied, "I don't think you'd like to see the floor if it wasn't polished, Gwen." "Of course not," said Gwen, speaking even more loudly and distinctly, as though addressing a child, "It's just a question of the polish you use, dear. It's worth taking trouble to get the right kind. It really is annoying about the post." "Perhaps there isn't any post for us today," suggested Brenda. Gwen's mouth went down in an injured pout. "Of course there is," she snapped, "it's the tenth of the month." Brenda blushed scarlet, she always forgot that wretched alimony. She wished the whole subject didn't embarrass her so, but Gwen seemed to be so proud of being a separated woman, any nice person would have wished to hide it. "I'm so sorry, I quite forgot," but the big orange-flecked face of her sister-in-law seemed to be swelling. Oh dear! thought Brenda, she's going to cry. She tried hard to imagine how awful it must be to have married Hugh Rutherford so that she could sympathise, but she knew very well she would never have married such a man, and if she had, she felt sure she would have held him. She could never get used to tears from so big a woman and in the morning too, when there was so much to do. But Gwen's tears were deflected by a sudden, trickling noise. The sisters-in-law looked down to see Boy's leg lifted high against the sofa. "Oh, you wretched dog," Brenda was really dismayed. Gwen picked up the little white-haired squirming animal, "Naughty boy" she said, "where are your manners?" and she tapped him on the nose. "I didn't mean to do it, Auntie

Brenda," she added in a baby lisp and then in her own clear enunciation. "Anyhow there's nothing that can't be cleared up in a minute. Come along, Boy, we're in disgrace, we'll go and powder our noses."

Brenda tried to dissipate her anger by dusting Rex's cups that he had won at school. He had been such a wonderful athlete, it had always made her proud to touch them, they looked so fine shining against the mahogany sideboard.

"Careful with the Lares, Brenda dear," said Basil, as he made his way upstairs. That damned bitch hadn't written and the pubs weren't open until twelve. He would go to his room and get on with that translation of "The Frogs." Bloody hell! he was a first-rate scholar *and* he'd knocked about a bit, just the man for Aristophanes. He'd astonish them with the finished article. "Mr. Palmer has given us a translation as accurate as any University don can demand and as witty as a West End Revue." But Basil knew that the tooth glass would be there and the remains of a bottle of whisky, the morning was a bloody awful time to be up, best to lie down and then if he could get that girl at the dance hall a bit canned, well me might . . . yes, there was always something to think about.

"I don't think Elsie's done your room yet, Basil!" Brenda called after him, but he affected not to hear. He'd lie in his shoes on the unmade bed, it was almost more than she could bear. She had tried so hard to share Rex's admiration for his brother, but if he was so clever why didn't he do something instead of sponging on Rex and being beastly and sarcastic all the time. Rex said Basil had been embittered by the way the College had treated him in taking away that lectureship, but people had no right to go on sulking like that. It had been so lovely going up to Cambridge with Rex to his old college, he had seemed so popular with the dons—the best athlete the college had known the master had said. She felt again the shape of that long muslin dress she had worn, shell pink it had been with a white satin princess petticoat. Rex had looked so handsome in his morning coat. He had shown her the Judas Tree in King's College garden, and she had won his praise when she had pointed out the thick cream colour of the magnolia flowers. "I never knew how beautiful Cambridge was until I saw it through my wife's eyes," he had said to his tutor. Now they could go there no more, because Rex had written so

sharply after Basil's dismissal.

Dog hair on the sofa, bootmarks on the chair covers, cigar smoke pervading the air, ash and newspapers all over the floor. This is my drawing room, thought Brenda, as she came in from the hall, and she straightened her back to control her rising hysteria. Suddenly she detected a smell of burning. Her father had gone to sleep and his cigar stump had set light to the little marqueterie table. "Oh father really," was all she said, as she put out the smouldering wood. Mr. Nicholson awoke with a start, "Sorry, girlic," he said, "I must have dropped off. Has the post come yet?" he asked, and a wave of self-pity came over him as he thought of himself a lonely old man who'd lived like a prince reduced to worrying whether some twopenny-half-penny bookie had sent a paltry tenner. "There doesn't seem to be any post," said Brenda in a flat voice. Mr. Nicholson looked up. "You sound tired, girlic. I don't know what old Rex is about letting you do all this housework." Brenda never attended to what her father said, after so many years of trying not to dislike and despise, she found it easier to forget him. "I'm all right, thank you," she replied. "If it's cash young master Rex is keeping you short of, I hope I'll be able to help you in a few days. I'm expecting a fairly large cheque, but at the moment I'm stony broke." Brenda never bothered to consider her father's words in relation to their truth, but she knew very well the pattern of his mind. "I think I can spare you some money, only you are not to worry Rex." "That's very good of you, girlic, I don't like to take it." "It's quite all right. I'd rather do anything than have you worry Rex." Brenda's honesty did not allow her to be gracious in making loans, her father knew why she was giving him the money, so that she saw no sense in pretending to motives of filial affection. "Will ten pounds be enough?" she asked. Cheated of his sentimental scene Mr. Nicholson was not prepared to be accommodating. "Better make it twenty," he said. "Very well," said Brenda, "I'll give you a cheque."

Neither porridge nor tea seemed to take the bitterness from Rex's mouth, and his head ached more painfully than it had before he got up. He swallowed two aspirins and decided to go out into the grounds. He walked down the side of the house past the rock garden. It looked so bare and pathetic in winter, but he anticipated with pleasure the masses of aubrietia, crimson, lavender, blue that would blaze there in May. The lily pond, too, looked

dismal with the pale reflection of the winter sun, only three goldfish had survived last month's ice. He felt happy, however, just to be alive here in the garden that was his own and then—suddenly he stepped out through the path in the wood on to the paddock and he felt quite sick. This was the beginning of the land he had bought for his sons, and there, at the far end, tossing their manes, as they ambled after one another, were Polly and Ginger. There would be no riding next holidays, he did not know how he would be able to tell the boys. In the foreground the cumbrous, grey sheep moved slowly, cropping the grass. He had been so pleased to allow Duckett the use of the pasture—"doing the squire" Basil would have called it—and now he must tell him to find some other field. "Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new." "The swollen sheep look up and are not fed." Well his family could never say that; if *they* were swollen, he thought savagely, it was because they fed so well at his expense. He definitely would not sell, he would tell them so today. "They must look after themselves," he said aloud, but as he spoke the words he knew that the fate of his sons' land was sealed.

Gwen and Mr. Nicholson were regretting the passing of the old West End when Rex came into the room. He had never cared for London, and since his family had wasted their money there, his hostility to the metropolis was almost pathological. He knew the pattern of this conversation so well, Gwen describing the gaiety of the "twenties", Mr. Nicholson countering with the stories of "nineties" night life, each outboasting the other, each hoping that he would be duly abashed at being so provincial. In his present frame of mind it made him feel almost murderous.

"My dear young woman," Mr. Nicholson was saying, "There *were* no music hall artists after Marie Lloyd. I'll never forget going with her to see one of these damned revues just before she died. 'Take me out, Jimmie,' she said, 'This is way above my station.' Poor old Marie, she never pretended to be anything but what she was, but I don't suppose there was a bigger-hearted woman living . . ." But here Gwen saw her chance. "Well, of course," she said, "I'm not old enough to remember much about Marie Lloyd, but I'm sure no actress can have been more generous than Florence Mills. What a wonderful show that was! Of course, there's no doubt that the coloured people have us completely beaten where dancing is in question. *You* remember Blackbirds,

Rex," she said, turning to her brother "or you ought to, we all went together that evening Hugh was so squiffy."

"There were so many evenings when Hugh was squiffy," said Rex savagely. "At the moment, Gwen I'm not very good at remembering." He squared his shoulders and with a certain air of drama, "I imagine you'll be interested to hear I've decided to sell the land" he announced.

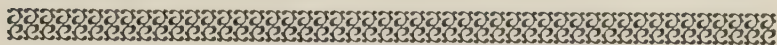
Mr. Nicholson was not apparently very interested, as soon as he felt sure that he would get the money, he preferred to regard the whole transaction as not affecting him. "You've done quite right, Rex, old boy, I'm, sure," he said in an offhand manner, and was about to resume his discussion, but Gwen was less subtle. "Thank goodness you've thought of your family at last," she said firmly, and she was about to release her feelings of the last few weeks when a certain flush in her brother's features made her pause. There were very few things that made Gwen Rutherford think twice, indeed thinking at all was by now an artificial process to her, and in general she believed in treating her brother's bad temper with sledgehammer firmness. Suddenly, however, as she looked now, she saw a little boy in Etons, his face flushed purple, driving the point of a pair of scissors into his nurse's hand, and again she remembered an older boy, almost sixteen, pounding and hitting at Basil's face on the green turf of the Downs, by the cliff edge where, far below, the Channel tossed grey and green. Such visual memories were so rare to Gwen that she stifled her words and sat back, her fat face puffed and trembling with the pent up indignation she had so nearly released.

When Basil came into the room they were all silent, almost brooding. "Good God!" he said, "the last day in the old home, eh?" "You're nearer than you think," replied Rex, "I've decided to sell the land." Basil's heart pounded with pleasure at his brother's humiliation, but now was not the moment to rub salt into the wound, so he changed the subject. "Seen anything of the post, Rex?" he said. "Yes." Gwen took up the tale. "I've been asking Brenda all the morning. It's most inconvenient." "I suppose it's never occurred to you that Brenda might find your continuous grumbling inconvenient," said Rex, his neck swelling over his collar. "No," said Gwen, her mouth snapping in fury, "it hasn't." "Well, it's time it did," said Rex, his voice high with hysteria. Basil cupped his hands behind his head and leant back in

the armchair. He gazed at his brother fixedly, "Poor old Rex, you don't like not being lord of the manor any more one bit, do you?" Rex strode across and stood over Basil, "You'll bloody well leave first thing tomorrow," he said. "You produce the money," laughed Basil, "and you won't see me for dust." Rex's clenched hands came up above his brother's face, Gwen gave a little scream. But any violence was avoided by Brenda's entrance. "Here's the post at last," she said, and, going up to her husband, she handed him a packet of letters. Rex's quick gaze caught sight of envelopes addressed to Basil, Gwen, Mr. Nicholson—and for himself, bills, bills. "Can you see my letter from the solicitors?" said Gwen quickly. "I think there ought to be one for me, Rex old boy," said Mr. Nicholson. They both spoke at once. "Yes," replied Rex in scarcely audible tones, "your letters are here," then suddenly his voice rose as it trembled with rage, "Whether you'll get them is another question. I decide what happens to letters that come into this house." "My God, you bloody, spoilt, little fool," shouted Basil, but he had allowed his genuine contempt to show at an unfortunate moment. Rex's colour flushed to scarlet, and his face fell on one side as though with a paralytic stroke, a fallen lump of twitching, scarlet flesh from which a dark eye stared wildly like a runaway horse's. He began to tear the letters into small pieces. Brenda's face was sorrowful, yet triumphant for her poor, unhappy, violent boy who was master of them all. Mr. Nicholson found no means to move, his age told against him when force was needed and he fell back on internal self-pity. Gwen's heavy mass melted into tears. Basil, alone, his jealousy and hatred of his brother bursting through his decayed faculties, took action. He seized Rex's hands, trying to prise the fragments of paper from the hysterically clenched fingers, but Rex's superior strength soon told, and pushing Basil to one side he sent him sprawling across the floor, scattering and breaking Brenda's little black china bowl of roses, with its kingfisher centrepiece. Turning sharply round, Rex flung the pieces of the letters into the fire. "That's where you can get your letters from, if you've got the nerve," he screamed, "I'll teach you to write whining to people outside. *I* provide for the family and in future you'll please remember that." Burying his head in his arms, he leant on the mantelpiece and began to sob.

The noise of her beloved objects breaking and the realisation that Rex's triumph had turned to tears roused Brenda into action.

"You'll be late for coffee, if you don't go soon," she said, in her flat voice, "would you remember to get some cakes in the town, Gwen, please. You'd better go too, father, you know you don't like to trust anyone else to change your library book." She ignored Basil as he rose from the floor, but she put her arm round her husband's waist. "Can you spare a minute, Rex darling," she said, "to look at the cistern. Cook and I have been doing our best with it, but it needs a man's hand."



Malcolm Lowry

ECONOMIC CONFERENCE 1934

"I'LL GO AND GET SOME BEER," SAID THE TAXIMAN, "YOU'RE not tired, are you?"

"That's swell of you, no I'm not," said Bill.

"You kip on my sofa whenever you feel like it," said the taxi going out, still keeping up the conversation until he was almost out of earshot.

Just like Laurel and Hardy, Bill thought, and he caught sight of his pale wet face in the mirror. Just like a circus clown in deepest distress. Well, a moment ago he had felt like crying at that.

Now as he heard the taximan, still muttering as he rummaged about in the kitchen, he felt almost gay. Well, well, well, was this certainly one way to investigate economic conditions in England! And he saw himself telling his friends on his paper in New York how he'd started in investigations by getting stranded in Chelsea at two o'clock in the morning without a cent in his pocket.

He looked around the room the London taximan had so courteously offered him until the morning. And it was partly with the deferential air a traveller preserves in a foreign museum, whatever the dictates of his critical faculty, and partly with the mute apprehensive appreciation of a guest, that Bill gazed at a watering can, five umbrellas, a silver topped cane, four Christmas robins, many

cups and shells with A Present from Rye on them, and a New Year's calendar from Daimler's. (The taxicab was a Beardmore.) He also saw, in glass cases along the dresser, a dead squirrel, a dead lovebird, and five stopped clocks. You couldn't explain the clocks away by wish fulfilment, Bill thought, picking up one of the conch shells and listening to the sea in it.

The taximan, Hardy, now entered, bringing beer.

"You had supper?" he asked.

"Sure. I had supper at the airport," Bill replied, focussing for a moment upon what, in the corner, appeared to be a stuffed, dead Chinaman and looking away again hastily.

"Airport. Ah. But they don't give you decarbonized plaice and carburettor sauce there, do they?"

"Pardon?"

"Not gasket of beef and upholstery pudding. I mean to say. They may do you well like, but you don't get Piston of Pork and Texaco sauce."

". . . don't? . . ." said Bill.

The taxi poured beer.

"Don't get what I mean to say? Well, you may get a good feed, but you don't get roast and mashed ball bearings, nuts, split-rings, and bolts, sweetheart and radiator custard, tyre lever grease, biscuits and cheese with two bottles of distilled water with a drain of carbolic thrown in—do you? No. But that's all right," he got up and started to walk restlessly round the room, "I don't hold that against you. Oh no." He turned on Bill suddenly. "I think I've got you sized up all right. You're a—*Canadian!*" He pointed a sinister finger at Bill.

"I'm an American."

"Same thing," snapped the taxi.

"On the contrary," said Bill, swiftly professional, "it isn't the same thing at all. If you mean because you only hold thirty-nine per cent. of foreign capital. . . ."

"I don't know anything about foreign capital. How do you find yourself like this?"

"I was going to fly from Heston to Liverpool, but the elevation was too bad. You couldn't see the gasworks." Bill felt this crowded explanation was not ringing true, the fellow obviously thought him a bad egg, some kind of a crook at least. "I came down here to see a friend and found he'd gone by train. I left my cheque book."

"Ah well," the taximan was already going down the corridor. "Let me show you the house anyway, before it's too late."

Glass in hand, Bill followed him to the kitchen. The taxi lit the gas.

"The world's going to the dogs," he said, "mark my words."

"It sure is," agreed Bill.

"Everything's going to pot," he said. "Nobody has a chance these days. Now I'll show you my garden."

He opened the door into the tempest. Outside was a howling chaos, an infinite impenetrable misery. . . . Not a chance tomorrow, thought Bill. (The plane cost him seven pounds a day.)

"Never mind Dandy Dinmont," he said as Bill tripped. "That's only a favourite big cat."

"Wasn't it your President Harding who buried the party funds in the garden over there?" said the taxi all in one breath, and he pointed into blank darkness. "Over there's my grapetree. Three hundred grapes on that. And five dead cats underneath it. Oh dead cats are fine for fruit." He stooped down and stroked Dandy Dinmont. "But Dandy Dinmont will never be dead cats willums Dandy Dinmonts?"

At this moment the gas blew out. The taximan closed the door with some difficulty, so that the storm sounded like the sea in one of the conch shells from Ryde.

"I have an old affectionate poodle too," he said.

In the kitchen the gasjet steadily whirled once more. In a basket slept the old affectionate poodle.

No one has a chance these days," said the taxi, "no one." He pointed to a photograph on the wall. "There are my three brothers, all of them dead now. . . ."

Three dead Hardys stared down from the wall.

"That first one, he got killed by a train—he got a bleeding muscle. And the second one here—he got a nail on the toe. And this young fellow, he got all set up with a pub and died two days later. Nobody gets a chance these days.

"I got three brothers too," said Bill. "You're lucky."

"Let's have some beer, I've got some whisky too," said the taxi. "Do you know what?"—they were walking down the corridor back to the room—"times have changed. They aren't what they're used to be. Say what you like their not. Now what's your line?"

"I write about economics," said Bill.

"Well now, that's funny, I've got a bit of something in your line. I composed a little bit of a piece. Now what do you think of this?" He cleared his throat: *I was sitting one day in my taxi when trade was terribly bad, I pondered the thousands of jobs I dreamed of but never had had. Said I what a glorious feeling For those taxi drivers of old When a gang would roll up in full armour And chuck him a purse full of gold. To your castle good fellow pray drive me Then damn it come and in dine On barons of beef and fat capons On filleted peacock and old wine. The old meter would merrily ticking, But what did he care about that Then a voice broke in on my visions Drive like hell to Waterloo please. I did so and got one and threepence I dined on bread onion and cheese. Once more at the wheel of my taxi Awaiting the next millionaire I vow to have fried fish for supper Then up came a fare from goodness knows where With his wife 2 dogs 3 cats 6 kids and a bag; Drive us lot to the Wheatsheaf old sporty He orders and says will you lend us a fag! I drove him two miles and a quarter Then to discover he'd spent all his dough, To my supper was dry bread and water How I wished I'd been born years ago,"* said the taxi.

"That's swell," said Bill.

"You must be hungry after that," said the taxi, who seemed very restless, as though about to make a long speech.

"No. Not a bit."

"You must be, yes. I'll get you some cheese. That reminds me of a little thing I composed myself—have some beer." He had already forgotten the cheese. "A little thing I composed myself called 'A boy should eat more than his father' or 'Dear William go Easy,' would you like to hear it? *Father of mine awaken I pray thee to the truth, Two helps of egg and bacon Are requisite to youth; And since thy little nipper needs much more food than thee, Deny thyself that kipper and hand it on to me.*"

"That's swell," said Bill.

"When I was in the States the first thing I remember was I was going to Boston to see my uncle. And I got out at the North or the South station and I got into an old old horse cab and I was frightened, see. But the driver just turned round and made me at home. How old are ye, son, he asks, ha ha. But when I get to my uncle's I offer to pay and he said This has been a very pleasant drive. They're things you've said which—well—I've never heard said before, he said: No you shan't pay a cent."

"Not even a cent?"

"Not even a cent. But when I got to upstairs to my uncles' there

he is cleared."

"Cleared?"

"Dead," snapped the taxi. "So this is what you call reparations, eh, ha ha, ho ho!"

"It's the only bargaining advantage we have left," said Bill, who was beginning to feel a little tight. (He had had heavy weather at the airport.)

"Jusst for that you're to have some whisky." As the taximan backed to the kitchen, he recited:

"The meal no longer dull is, Dad chuck across that toast, For at last my empty stomach Says I should rule the roast. Hunger must have its qualm allayed, Beyond my wildest dream, Go slow there with the marmalade, Let me scrape out the cream; Pile up my platter rather than Thine with chunks of pine, Because my need dear father, Is greater far than thine."

"Chunks of pine," shouted Bill who had followed him into the corridor to listen, and he heard his voice resounding querulously, like Laurel's. "What does that mean? That doesn't seem to fit somehow."

"Chunks of pine," said the taxi.

"Chunks of pine," said Bill, "I don't see that at all. That seems to me forced."

He came into the kitchen. Three dead Hardys, frustrated in life, stared down at the fabulous scene. In the basket snored the old affectionate poodle.

"Pineapple," muttered the taxi. "Come on, we've got the whisky now."

"That's subtle," said Bill.

They shambled down the corridor back into the room.

"Now for the whisky," said the taxi.

The two men attacked the whisky.

"Now you say you're a writer about economics," said the taxi, "but what do you want to come over here for? Haven't you enough troubles of your own over there?"

"I came over here to investigate conditions."

"Conditions! Ha!"

It was as though a bomb had been dropped.

"Conditions," repeated the taxi in a sinister tone, "did I hear you say conditions? Conditions, eh?"

"Economical conditions," said Bill thickly.

"Economical conditions. Well I'll give you conditions," the

taxi crashed his fist on the table making the glasses jump.

For a moment the room seemed to vibrate with his anger.

"Economy. I'll give you economy. I could write a book about it, a book. Yes, I'll give you economy. In particular yes. I'll give you economy," he growled.

He looked slowly round the room as if sizing up the opposition bench.

"So you want to know about conditions, eh? Ha ha, I'll tell you. Ho!"

He crashed his fist again on the table.

"If ever there was a time of crisis when I and a picked selection of my family ought to be in Parliament because as a family what we don't know about economy in every shape and form isn't worth thinking about not long ago people talking economy were looking very foolish at what they have done to put that crazy lot in Parliament goes beyond my comprehension," said the taxi.

"Sure," said Bill.

"For me and a good many other million citizens," he stood up brandishing his glass, "the cabinet which introduced that campaign were working on completely false lines. They don't know the true meaning of economy of economy there are two forms one good which results in the saving of money time and trouble and the other false which means losing a damn sight more than you gain but Government officials do not study economy in that way today we are told every day the country was down and out and to save the Situation we must save every possible penny it can therefore to assist us to do so the chancellor of the exchequer and *Satellites* gather together and proceed to device every heinous diabolical scheme to skin us of our last shilling in order to keep up Old England's reputation and pay foreign governments huge sums of money for interest on war loans—hell knows what I don't call that economy it's damned *robbery*," said the taxi.

"Sure," said Bill.

"You take economy. I'll take the dough. Isn't that right?"

"Sheer robbery," said Bill.

"Now look at it in my point of view and personal light supposing I was able to borrow one pound from every taxi driver in London I should then be the happy possessor of a little fortune of ten thousand quids. Mind you then we will presume that the taxi men wanted their money back as there is every reason to

suppose they might do as the rumour is pushed around that I am going broke. Do you think it would be economy on my part to go to my bank manager as I easily could and ask him for an overdraft of ten thousand pounds to pay them with. CERTAINLY NOT such a foolish act would be false economy and a sheer waste of time and I should be no better off the proper thing to do would be to clear out to South America or some spot where the extradition act is not in force and live in peace and comfort, that would be true economy despite anything my taxidriver friends may say to the contrary. I cannot say what happens when Government officials herd together and discuss the nation's financial position, but I should think something like this happens, "said the taxi.

"Half a minute," said Bill.

"Behind those locked doors of Downing Street the Prime Minister addresses them and remarks that the government funds are in a hell of a mess, and the time is not far off when they won't be able to pay themselves their own salaries which spells disaster and ruin, he then calls on the chancellor to knock up a new Budget to raise about ten thousand million pounds from the simple public in order to have a little cash in hand to carry on with for the moment the chancellor remarks that the job is simple enough which he could do standing on his head," said the taxi.

"As he probably does," said Bill, now carried away.

"... But one word gentlemen will that be sufficient. Wouldn't it be better to make it twice that amount to be on the safe side and unforeseen expenses to this the Prime Minister agrees, the Chancellor then asks for a list of goods used by the cabinet ministers and M.P's so that he shall not get into ill favour with them by taxing away of their wants or hobbies, this being supplied he puts down some figures on the back of an envelope, and in a few hours some two million civil servants are grumbling at the work thus ruthlessly thrown upon them and all for a hand to mouth living is slave driving of a most iniquitous type. Economy in its truest form means the cutting down of expenses, and there are many reforms which could be made to reduce national expenditure without putting the heaviest on the poor and poor devils that is buying a home and privilege to live in same for years past, we have imported free of duty every damn rascal booked out of alien country to rob the Britisher of his bread by cheap labour no personal reflection intended," said the

taxi. "Not granted," said Bill.

"I for one have been the victim of these mobile police for the simple reason for trying for an honest living, they hound us poor devils to death while the rich's cars stand for hours whilst they are guzzling champagne," said the taxi, pouring whisky.

"What about Russia?" asked Bill.

"Yah," growled the taxi, "all those who do not work for the common good are fools, and sooner or later it comes to a fall, then your friends the mouths that has talked so much wonders what is going to happen to keep the home fires burning, tax every swine that goes abroad holiday-making and may the smash and grab pinch the lot. *Yah, generosity*, I do buy de cow in de British country and I do send them out to France and I do send the British man to milk de cow and I do send de milk back to the British country for de British to buy British. No comment. Capitalism finds no use for goods that Labour create. Wage cuts—Empire monopoly—Tariffs—Fascist dictatorship against workers tighten your belts prepare for war: strikes sweep the industrial centres, this is the cry of capitalism today, unorganized workers do not give way to despair:—No," shouted Bill.

Suddenly the two unorganized workers were frolicking round the room, hooting and trumpeting.

"No hope." "No disarmament."

"No war debts." "No national trade."

"Nothing but trouble in the Orient." "I know I was there."

"You were there." "So was I!"

"So was I!" "That's great!"

"That's swell!"

"During the war, look—" the taximan rolled up his sleeve.

"During the war, look—" Bill pulled off his shirt.

"And look here," the taximan rolled down his woollen sock.

"And here—" Bill rolled up his sleeve—"wounded in the cause."

"A land fit for heroes to live in!"

"Your debt to us. Pah. Have a drink," invited Bill.

"After collapse of commodity." "After collapse of stock exchange."

"After world financial crisis!" "After the Young Plan."

"We're all going to hell." "We've all got a kick in the pants coming to us."

"Take France." "Take Italy."

"Take Tchechoslovakia . . ." "Keep them."

The two men frolicked and rolled round the room. The stuffed Chinaman fell forward like a shot man. Three of the stopped clocks fell with a crash so that their glass cases were smashed to smithereens. The Christmas robins and the umbrellas were scattered.

"To hell with them," said the taxi. "Take Japan."

"Japan would have been in hell if it hadn't been for the earthquake."

"And now you're going to blow them there."

"You used to back Japan, but with the lapse of the Anglo Japanese alliance and our hostility after the Washington treaty and our ban on Jap immigration in 1924 she was left without an ally it's all a racket," shrieked Bill in one breath.

"Ah, they're damn clever these Japanese."

"Ah, they're damn clever these Japanese."

At this, Bill became more sober.

"Would you like a trip by air to Hoton," he asked. "If it's fine tomorrow?"

"Not if you paid me," said the taxi who was still dancing around.

"And about that—look, what do I owe you, will you let me know . . . ?"

"Not a cent. No. Not a cent. I've heard things tonight that I haven't heard said."

"But I owe you your fare."

"Not a cent."

"Look, I don't like to ask" said Bill, "but if you're going to sleep late tomorrow can I borrow twopence for a phone call?"

"Twopence. Take half a crown. Take a pound. I don't know whether I've got a pound," said the taxi, dancing around.

The glass cases containing the stuffed squirrel and the stuffed lovebird at last fell with a dithering crack.

"To hell with them," he said. "Take the Polish corridor."

"But look, I must pay you back, at least, will you leave me your . . . can't you, I, Mr. . . . " said Bill.

"Don't bother about that," snapped the taxi.

"But look here, guy . . . "

"Just call me Bill, everyone calls me Bill," said the taxi, dancing around.

"My name's Bill too," said Bill.

Malcolm Lowry

TURNED BACK AT THE BORDER

I

*A singing smell of tar, of the highway,
Fills the grey Vancouver Bus Terminal,
Crowned by dreaming names, Portland, New Orleans,
Spokane, Chicago, and Los Angeles!
City of the angels and my luck,
Where artists labour to insult mankind
With genius coeval to the age,
And city of my love, come next Sunday.
Out of a flag-bung shop a sleeked puppet
Hands me a ticket and my destiny.*

II

*The blue exhaust speeds parting's litany.
Then, with pneumatic bounds we herd the street.
The lights, symbolic, nictitate in day.
Cautions, but with mechanic persiflage,
—Rolando's horn could no more strangely wind—
Past Chinatown and names like Kwong Lee Duck,
Our bus treads asphalt with the noise of bees,
By taverns mumbling of skidroad scenes,
Then double-declutched my heart through neutral
And sang it into high for U.S.A.*

III

*White gulls blow from the Rockies like Norway.
High tension wires are marching in my blood.
The bus sang o-ka-lee, sang cong-a-reee—
That loved cry of the northwestern redwing
Who carries her own badge, her own fieldmark
Of bright identity on her shoulders!
She is her own custom's official
And crosses the wild border without let,*

*To weave that lowland meadow nest, whose branch
No slenderer to tempest is than ours.*

IV

*A pathos broods, a desolation glowers
On an outpost of turnstiles and anguish,
A rebuke of Labrador in the slate
Cold grey, and striking up the mortal chill
Of no man's land to the soil: the Border's
Men—badged, pistoled, polite, pitiless—lurk
Aware it is well names, Blaine, an itching
On the outstretched bare hand of our country.
A legend bird there has three eyes: indeed
For no tears one does not need so many.*

V

*Inspectors here crunched bags on injured locks,
Deduced a public charge from odd cowled socks.
"A visa's not enough," one said, and I:
"Must man go to war, yet not say good-bye?"
"I didn't," he said, without marked kinship,
"Last time."—Some subtle indoor Marxmanship
Suspecting then, automatically
Perhaps, he smiled democratically . . .
Without me, with a trampling noise of bees
The bus plunged headlong toward Los Angeles.*

VI

*Well, the redwing's a public charge! Over
The border she flies: and in her choices
Of landing rests the heart that wields the sword
For itself too! . . . Yet, how should I praise you
Along the fjords by wild cat-tails going
Or keeping watch from your mast in marshlight?
God speed, my darling, wherever you blow,
Each wave and tuft of your direction.
Nature far more generously supports
You, than we the out-of-work whistlepunk.*

VII

*The packed bus that brought me back glared and stank
Of beer, chiefly mine, in vapourous quarts.
But chaos caught me in the suction
Of a roaring parallel darkness now
Stabbed with landmarks in the wet night, none quite
Verified, all of a heartbreak flowing
Past lovers united on billboards, through
The crash,—sigh—of juggernauts borderward,
And the grinding of hypocrites voices,
And the mind jammed in reverse forever . . .*

VIII

*The helpless submarine is left aglow,
A smoking cigar on the Sargasso.
So burns the soul in this fluxion! Well,
No peace but that must pay full toll to hell.
But, little friendly bird, rather would I
A thousand human deaths inhuman die
That have no wings, than this which gives a song
Wherewith, to the snarled applause of the strong
Sea, in a Vancouver ashen with war,
Brief, to praise Oregon and Mount Tabor.*

Pablo Neruda

A SONG FOR BOLIVAR

*Our Father who art on earth
in water and the air
of all our huge expanse of silence,
father, all bear your name within our dwelling,
your family-name, the sugarcane exalts it into sweetness,
the bolivar of tin emits a bolivar gleam,*

*the bolivar bird is on the bolivar valcano,
the potato and the veins of phosphorescent stone,
all of our good has issued out of your extinguisht life.
Your heritage was rivers, plains, and bells of home,
your heritage is our daily bread.
Your small corpse of a gallant captain
has infinitely outspread its metallic print.
Sudden your fingers rise among the snows
and the southern fisher draws up sudden to the light
your smile, your voice vibrating in his ropes.
What colour has the rose we train towards your soul?
Red's the right colour for the rose recalls your tread
What of the hands that touch your ashes?
Red will be the hands born from your ashes.
And what of the seed of your dead heart?
Red is the seed, red, of your living heart.
And that's the reason, today, for the circle of hands about you.
Beside my hand is another, and by that other another,
and another, right on to the depths of the obscure continent.
And another hand, which then you did not know,
comes, Bolivar, to grasp your hand.
From Teruel, Madrid, Jarama, the Ebro,
out of the jail, the dead of Spain
is stretched this red head daughter of your own.
Captain, fighting, where a mouth
cries Liberty, where an ear listens,
where a red soldier breaks a grey front,
where a laurel of independence springs, where a new
flag is bright with the blood of our signal dawn,
Bolivar, captain, we make out your face,
once more amid the powder and smoke your sword's about to flash.
Once more your flag is glittering with blood.
The wicked turn their hate against the seed again.
Nailed on another cross is the Son of Man.*

*But still your shadow leads us to the edge of hope,
 the laurel and the light of the red army,
 across the American night, glance with your glances.
 For there are eyes which keep good watch beyond the seas,
 beyond the peoples wounded and oppressed,
 beyond the black and burnt-out cities,
 your voice is born again, your hand returns.
 Your army still defends the sacred banners
 and a terrible rumour of pain precedes
 the dawn, reddened with the blood of man.
 Liberator, in your arms a world of peace is born:
 peace, bread and wheat come thriving from your blood:
 from our young blood that issues from your own
 will rise up peace and bread and wheat to feed the world we make.
 I spoke with Bolivar through a long morning
 at Madrid, on the Fifth Regiment's threshold.
 "Father," I said, "are you or not, who are you?"
 And, looking at the Mountain Quarter, he replied,
 "I waken every hundred years, when the people waken."*

Translated by J.L.



THE TALE OF AN OLD GREEK IN RECENT DAYS

Written by a Woman

EPISODE OF THE TRANSFER TO THE LAST-BUT-ONE ÆGEAN ISLAND:

UNDER THE FASCIST TYRANNY IN GREECE THE Authorities transferred an old political exile from island to island. For wherever he stayed there grew up a sense of well-being, which they couldn't suppress and which affected even the guards. So they transferred him every few months, till he became familiar on the steamers of the

Cyclades. A poet who once travelled in the same ship made the following poem, changed his itinerary, and landed with the escort.

- (i) *They have bound you fast to the foremast
Do you regret you were born with a mark upon you?
Your mouth is scornful as a deadman's mouth
Open it and they'll take your irons off
and then at last the light of grief will rise*
- (ii) *Grief is a long day of the summer
It opens voyages up
Delights leap out like dolphins
rare dolphins seen beside our steamer
and men who are grieving voyage
across long summers*
- (iii) *The shores breathe out a fragrance
from groves and hillsides with no fruit—
little bees, little bees you too rejoice
wherever lemon-groves are blossoming
and that unwatered incense-grass
But also from his breath such honey drips
heavier than all the honeycomb of your hives*
- (iv) *Thus they transfer him bound
though binding is forbidden out at sea
evening falls and the carpet is folded up
with its villages and embroidered cities
the normal and the unforeseen of every day
the pitchy patience of night unfolds
sighs are smoking from the stacks
all sleepers look alike
and even more alike the sleepless*
- (v) *What have you learned as they take you past these shores?
In regions where the fevers are
babies have bellies like old women
Where earthquakes happen*

*they build their houses out of bricks of mud
everywhere men encased
in coffins made of glass, their habits
Only the eye that passes by
touches the flesh*

- (vi) *Tall headlands signify deep waters
low capes a sandy bottom, shallow
coasts without a mark
Greek coasts O Greek
and a few places are familiar for some charm
such as the Strait of Chalkis where the waters
every six hours ebb and flow
then the bridge opens letting through
big craft and small, which as they pass
shout out the name of ship and captain
whence coming whither going
last port and destination*

- (vii) *Straits gather mistiness
St Elias Chapels glimmer white on hilltops
and from a path each village hangs
greenery signifies water
water signifies wealth
but sleep and waking in those places
as among wealthy folk are heavy*

- (viii) *He lifts his head when darkness deepens
he sees the topmast of the mast
at root of which he's bound
marked out among the stars
the rigging and the ropes distinct
each in its order and he says:
Let them take me bound
let them nail the prison-windows
let them blind me enough so I can sit
recalling all the things I've loved*

- (ix) *The mast holds conversation with him:
I cannot tell if it was curse or blessing*

*that cut me from the forest
but whether as leafy wood or timber
I've never felt against me
a more dishevelled head*

- (x) *Sometimes your breast like a seaworthy bow
cleaves the waves rejoicing
Sometimes it's tangled in the chains and grieves.
Then your guards O let me laugh
hearing your moans of grief encircle you
with lifted rifles they encircle you
O what have they encircled with their rifles lifted?
This year's little crab that's seeking
an empty shell for sleeping-quarters.*

As to how he settled himself in a hollow rock:

This voyage they brought him to the last-but-one island in the Ægean. There the exiles ate once a day and drank water that welled out halfway up a cliff. They risked a broken neck every time they climbed to fill their barrels. They walked barefoot and let their beards grow. The good heart of the Old Man seemed to them a dew which deceived but did not ease their ordeal in the drought of this treeless island. So he retired to a hollow above the water-drip. At the opening he flattened a few feet of earth and built a low parapet with dry stones, and they brought an old wireless set and put it there, so that he might get as much news as he could reach. His ear was greatly sharpened, and his patience. They used to bring him bread when they climbed for water, and any other food they managed to gain, and he told them the news. Also he spoke to them according to the occasion and his disposition. According to the winds as well. For many hours he spoke before the open sea as though it were a microphone that carried his voice.

Thoughts about the unitary process on a day of unseasonable calm:

In the middle of winter on a day of unseasonable calm he said:

Today in nature the winds are sleeping, the sleepless are asleep.

Today we are encircled by calm and stillness, we are transfixed and brought to judgment by calm and stillness.

Today our place is in calm and stillness.

Today we know and feel in calm and stillness.

But each place and time reaches out to its antithesis.

Each meaning and form is simultaneous with its contrary: stillness movement, wind windlessness.

Today the windlessness, the calm; yesterday and tomorrow, winds and movement

Unbroken participation

Stillness does not break movement nor movement stillness

We reach stillness through movement and movement through stillness

We have a place in stillness and movement

We exist in the calm and in the winds

We exist and non-exist in the calm and the winds

Perpetually we participate in everything

We participate by a unitary sense and knowledge in being and non-being

The unbroken participation by unitary sense and knowledge is the link with the whole, becomes the whole unbrokenly

And the unbroken is the whole

And being unbroken is a contradiction

And being unbroken and contradictory it moves unceasingly.

Unitary sense and knowledge is the sense and knowledge of the unbroken contradictory forever-moving whole.

Infinite quality of the unitary sense and knowledge:

The unitary sense and knowledge leads to the sense and knowledge of the infinity of forms and meanings

The sense and knowledge simple as a grassblade unifies the infinity of forms and meanings

And one crouching body on this remote edge of the sea will connect infinite forms and meanings

No form or meaning remains outside the unitary whole

Or remains still

Exclusion equals limit equals stop

But limit and stop are transitional since they are inseparable from their antithesis within the unitary whole

Else the whole would not be whole

Nor unbroken nor contradictory nor perpetually moving

Therefore the whole includes all forms and meanings

And every form and meaning in the whole is equally unbroken, perpetually moving, and contradictory like the whole.

The old man turned his thoughts to exultation:

Today our participation is this breathless calm, this vanishing,
this silence

Today this serenity, this dimness, with skies and seas made one
Tomorrow the winds, tumult, differentiation

Today with the one body, the starved, the almost-void, the
voiceless

Tomorrow with the articulate, the sweet of voice,

With minerals that hide and birds that go migrating

With all that comes too soon or too late, with the quick and the
slow

With the cattle that run wild and trample the one who brings
them fodder

With the crews that have beached their ships

With the weary who lie in the shade and fountains spring from
their sides

What is one body, what are many?

One is stretched out, one wanders far, one sleeps, one cheats the
guards: participating everywhere and always, is lost and found,
disappears and does not disappear "till when?" I am lost and
found, shall be lost and found, near and far, I and he.

Episode of the steamer which carried and distorted a word:

The steamer of the non-paying line passes near the shore in this
rare calm. On the sea are heard the conversations of the passengers,
and the wake of the steamer pours out thick and brown as honey.
At one moment the engine stops and a voice is heard: "till when?"
The sailors spring up from their drowsy watches, the passengers'
conversation is cut short, the captain leaps to the bridge and looks
fore and aft with a stern eye. But immediately the engines resume
the regular doop-poo-doop. Then when the sun sets, mystery
dominates. One woman passenger says that the statue of a woman's
torso has been following the steamer. It came to the surface, rocked
like a thing of the sea, half a body and the face covered with sea-
weed and shells and the mouth a hole, it appeared and sank, came
up and sank many times, and once it gave a scream. And then on
reaching Peiraios, when there was talk of it, a boatman remembered
that when he worked as a smuggler along the furthest capes of those
waters a righteous man was living in solitude. The boatman often
saw a light on the untrodden spot, for in the man's cave there

burned three petrified candles with no oil.

Thus travelled the voice of the old man—

Thoughts on time:

The old man went inside his cave and pursued his thought for three days and nights voicelessly:

Exile is a war with time, the sentenced days are battles

Exile is a measure of time, above all a sense and knowledge of time

Time is another definition of the unitary whole, the first and last meaning of stillness and movement in the unitary whole

The sense and knowledge of the unitary process is the sense and knowledge of time.

Then the old man remarked:

Venizelos above all others in his time and country prepared the internal split. In no country with the First War was there such a split from top to bottom. The heavy pregnancy in the first birth of the workers' revolution was rightly left for broad-bosomed Russia.

But why not hear of the Burial of Venizelos?

The revolutionary sense and knowledge do not weaken by confronting ways and creatures and incidents surrounding the revolution.

Nor is the revolutionary sense and knowledge a fortified monastery. The revolutionary comes out, approaches, learns and feels and touches even that which fights him.

The mason then began in a lively voice:

I remember when the news came that Venizelos was dangerously ill, all mouths changed their tongue and newspapers devised grave words that seemed appropriate. One newspaper wrote the old Akritan poem:

Diogenes' soul battles for life and earth cowers

And the gravestone meditates how to cover him.

And after the news of his death houses and shops and cafés were filled with the gestures of grief, the eyes of friends shedding tears at greeting one another, recent or long past features of the dead being cited. As if half Greece were the backyard of his house. And people began inventing those truths and lies which they mix up decoratively whenever they act together, the women recalled

dreams and signs. A fruit-peddler going down to the fruitmarket with his little cart thought he saw in the middle of Omonoia Square six large women who filled a hollow in the asphalt; and when he asked them who they were and what they were doing, they told him. We are Crete, Macedonis, Epiros, Samos, Chios, Mitylene, the Venizelist regions; and alas we are to cover up a fallen planetree. And one Vourla woman of Kessariani dreamed of his coming to the refugee quarter dressed in scarlet velvet flung over one shoulder like Haile Selassie, and as he was passing invisible music played Arabian tunes, which portends a grievous glory. And the refugees were saying that now the king would find an excuse (because the winter had been light and the flies and mosquitoes hadn't been killed off) an excuse for sending them all away from the quarter, on pretence of preventing disease. Not fearing Venizelos any longer.

And the women from the quarters came down and threw handfuls of flowers in little bunches through the railings in the gate of his house. Then the rich followed their example with baskets and wreaths, till the place was heaped over. And at night they stuck candles on the railings and kept them alight. And as though his breath were still reaching friends and opponents, the big ones acted and reacted over his burial, till at last the government, refusing to bring him into Athens, sent warships to take him from the foreign port direct to Crete, Hania.

And all Hania was draped in black, the wharves and the boats black, the windows and the balconies and the trees and the streets festooned with black crepe. At crossroads they hung mournful streamers inscribed with lamentations instead of welcome. They said: The cypress tree fell, gone is the old one, wail O Cretans, Psiloritis mountain cries

*Charon do not boast
That you have defeated a brave man
You found him in an alien land
Stretched on a bed.*

And by his halfruined paternal home in Mournies the refugee women from Asia Minor spread carpets on the street, stood his photo against the wall, and wailed in turn. The villagers came down to their shore, and the old rebel chiefs with their arms, yet not one cry or quarrel came from those tongues that daily break bones. And outside his house in Haleppa the crowd waited for

hours. They said his body would be left there in the garden for three days to take pleasure in the blossoming trees. For Venizelos like a sea-tossed captain in old age loved his garden passionately, and sent seeds and grafts when he travelled or went into exile, and wrote in his last letter that he yearned unnaturally this year to come back. On the Friday at sunrise the smoke of the ships was seen, in a meditative sky, not at all clear, and when the ships came near before dropping anchor, a white launch darted out, the only white craft they had, and it took the coffin and brought it ashore raised aloft. And as it was taken out, the crowds swayed and moved forward as they did when he was alive. Then a little glass window was opened in the coffin, and his head appeared all white, without spectacles, very small, laid on a velvet cushion. And all who looked for him gave a groan. Afterwards fifty men in Cretan dress lifted the excessively heavy lead coffin onto the wheels of a caisson and pulled it to the metropolis. The three bishops of Crete marched ahead, and the clergy, and all around his friends and fellow-citizens and fellow-warriors, and his deputies and ministers, the few solemn officials lost in the crowd, coat-tails and braid counting for nothing. People had come from all parts. In Peiraios boats filled up and sailed as if for the festival of Tenos, and that year the pilgrimage of the Virgin was messed-up, though the fare to Crete was high. From the metropolis they took him to StMagdalene of Haleppa, and there awaited the best wailers in Crete, who were told not to soar into a threnos and high lamentings, so they wailed modestly and kept the straight mourning tune, like bees, for two days and nights. And the people came in and out and made prostrations. And tough men behaved like orphan children, standing in corners and weeping. And the people of Haleppa, wishing to keep him within their parish, opened a grave in an empty plot, which they bought for the purpose. Other friends wanted to take him to the crypt of the Monument of Liberty erected on the cape. But his friend Eliakis, visiting the crypt, swore that as he bent he felt a strong shove and heard the voice of Venizelos, shrill, as in his great angers, saying that they were not to bury him under those heavy marbles but at the very edge of the cape. And so it was done, and they buried him under a solitary pine on a Sunday morning. The procession came up and the nuns of Korakia lined the path, and it was lightly raining. And the relatives closed the little glass window and he was lowered down, and some of his friends turned

and went off in a hurry, and others sat down as if reaped by the scythe, and others had no heart to go. An old refugee emptied over the grave a jug of water filled at the spring of his settlement in Macedonia and brought with his own labour and at the cost of his fellow-villagers. He emptied it and broke it there. The men dressed in Cretan trousers fired three times, and the smell of gunpowder spread over the fresh earth. That night there was a down-pour and a spring-storm shattered the headland with its waves, and the ships were delayed in returning.

Then the Poet said that the Mason had described this funeral very pleasantly, as if he had taken the company to it and they had had a pleasant time.

And the Old Man said again. Again from the tale of Venizelos whom the world loved I come back to the despised end of Lysandros, who went down into the earth with a false name, quite naked, as the most righteous of men.

So this most righteous and exceptional man leads us to the supreme moment where life and death unite.

Since the death of the exceptional revolutionary begins before death

His life discarding all consecrated equipment, even a name, thus coming very close to death

And his death calculated and accepted as life

Life and death a double outermost tendril of a vineplant, watered and dried at the same moment

So every time and place by increasing the power of life increase the power of death

And the power of life does not separate or guard him from death

And as deeply as he hopes that life will prevail he expects its annihilation: dual, inseparable, offering an acceptance.

And death becomes a contribution, it becomes also a preparation, equally appropriate the *Let-us-die* as the *Let-us-live*

And the authority which judges and parades and insults the revolutionary life serves like an uninitiated servant in a ceremony

Thus death provides sense and knowledge as much as life

And as a steamer advances and comes intangibly close to the antipodes of the earth and crosses beyond

Thus the death of the revolutionary moves on and does not nail down, it crosses and unites two furthestmost meanings, discovery and loss, end and beginning, scornful oblivion and the movement

from scornful oblivion to splendid explication.

Thus I evoke the simultaneous dual fulfilment of Lysandros. As his desecrated body lost its sense and knowledge, the unitary sense and knowledge took flesh supremely with his last breath on the filthy floor of his prison. His most evil death is also the best. Loss and reward, with no need of a compliment.

I shall never cease to remember this dual meaning of Lysandros' death, our excellent revolutionary and marvel.

And as the Old Man fell silent, they all remained speechless. But the discourses on death had led them like narrow paths before a mountain hollowed by many caves. So the mind of each wandered in and out with a taper lighted by this aching knowledge. And with that aching knowledge they tasted and remembered whatever else was desirable and inaccessible.

The Village Chanter then chanted three ecclesiasticals in three tones, and the evening solitude of the mountain and of their position softened.

Lastly the Mason recited this poem which a woman had made up for the drowned boy:

*Shores and seas poured balms on the small body
gilded his head
and once more shared it.
A little far-off hill
took the brown body
one arm of the sea
took the golden head.*

On Pleasure :

The Old Man was telling an exquisite noon-breeze that reached the entrance of his cave:

O I delight

And my body feels as though it will never be lost

With other winds we praised the weakness of the flesh

But to what purpose was such praise?

A minute after my death my breathless mouth will express it to perfection

With these the sweetest winds I give my praise to pleasure

Pleasure the most direct sense and knowledge of life

And the sense and knowledge of life lead most directly to pleasure

As exiles deprived of lawful existence, deprived of our very names, we are deprived of pleasure

As perpetually moving above all things we pass beyond privation
In exile privation reaches non-existence and passes clean beyond it

The irrational and utterly insecure existence of exiles, painful to the point of martyrdom, becomes a rational rejoicing fulfillment perfectly secure.

Woe to that sense and knowledge which succeeds in drawing back the hand stretched towards the desired breast. But today let us set human love aside, in case our great deprivation makes our sense and knowledge unjust. In a just life every breath is a desire. And every breath of desire is equally an explanation and a manifold unique mystery insatiable fugitive and endless. Now let us recall smells.

The Lame Man cited the wine-smell when must is loaded and transported, the etesian wind that smells of cut fruit before it blows.

The Teacher cited the afternoon-smell of streets watered in the summer, the lemon-trees of spring that make the students faint in Athens.

And the Lame Man recalled the barren islands, even this unblest island which at early dawn smells from the open sea like churches at the end of a liturgy. Also the smell of Easter. Also the smell of the Straits of Polis.

Then the Old Man said: Here you confuse the pleasure of fragrance with the pleasure given out by some names like fragrance. *Polis Polis Easter Easter*: such words as words yield a sweetness and a yearning. This yearning does not fade out, it brings distant things near and gives them the flesh of a presence. And again when persons and places, close at hand, fail to satisfy although they own such fragrant names, the yearning remains as though of something distant. And as the mouth mentions them, it tastes a sweetness and the delicate sadness they have offered and may offer yet. Many places have this dual quality. Other names on the contrary remain like closed windows.

Then they remembered food.

The Lame Man cited: home-made wheatbread, ripe sweet olives, a cake that his godmother made with cinnamon and sesame, fresh water everywhere on earth, *tsipuro* of Crete, Cretan cream cheese, smoked roe from Missolonghi, cream from the Salonika bazaar, *loukomes* of Syra, hot tripes at dawn, melons of Argos.

The Schoolteacher said with a sad humility: I never knew any good food, let alone ate it. I was fourteen, at the yearly Konitsa Fair, when I first tasted *pasteli*, and it seemed to me beyond price. How could they sell it for the same drachmai as maize? In good vine-years we used to make grape-paste and dip into it fresh walnuts hung on a thread, called *soudzoukia*.

Then they spoke of many things, secret and familiar, which they had touched as men and in their childhood.

The Lame Man remembered the sunny staircase of their house when the women sat sheltered in winter and the vine-trellis they sat under in summer. The very fine sand at the bottom of a sea-inlet on which he leaned his cheek in a dive. A sash that an old uncle offered him on his first journey to gird his loins.

The Schoolteacher remembered the undergrowth where he lay stretched in the forest, soft and pungent. And a marble seat under the Acropolis, in the Theatre of Dianysos, where he sat in the winter sun and studied. And an army overcoat bought by his uncle on returning from America and finding him a student in rags. That was the first time he wore a coat, and the cosiness of the warm cloth seemed unreal.

We started out, four friends, from love of the world, to reach the bridge where we agreed to look for the future good that would explain the present evil.

And I thought that the coming-together of the world would be such a good

And on that morning what we saw and knew appeared coherent and explained at that spot and moment so precisely

And I was caught up in great joy and in a hurry to say it and I said it singing

Once more singing in order that words may run on a tune as on wheels

Ignoring the fact that I was not alone

Taking no heed lest my hurry and my delight and my singing
should cut me off from you

I boasted of my separation and then your anger was my pride

Untimely untimely the hour was no hour for singing

My hurry useless, you wanted other things

Useless all the sacrifice of my head

And so what happened happened

The most innocent ones were stricken, the kindest-hearted

The hurry into good had led us into evil

We set out for understanding and arrived at incoherence

Instead of unity separation ruled

Now only half of our number are left, two Greeks spared

Once more two Greeks are spared and we walk on a strange earth

Strangers, entire strangers, walking very slowly out of fear

We have been spared but humble is our walk

Gone is the pride, the grace of friendship gone

Gone the melodies and the encounters

Once more we walk but heavy is our movement

Our movement is heavy with the evil that we carry on our
shoulders and that we brought about

We walk with loads on our shoulders and our walk is a ransom

And we pay for untimely haste

And this message to our friend has been paid for

For we shall not hurry any more or talk in songs

And when we reach a point we'll reach it all together

And we shall see the future good together

Whatever good we reach we'll reach it all together

Together we shall see the unified world which I saw in my loneliness and lost

At one place at one hour our eyes will unify and put the world
together

But when our eyes have unified the world we shall not stop to
make a noise or wipe our tears away, but we'll go walking the
unified world with one hand on our heart to ensure it doesn't break

For this unified world will endlessly be walked over and
travelled

The simple ones will travel there and the lovers

They will say I love the world and rejoice because they are not
trees

The world will stand like a closed garden: with the simple ones

and the lovers and the workers pitilessly planted out in borders and in rows

The swift will travel there and the slow as well

The joyful and the grieving

With their left hand on their heart, like a forking branch from the time when they were trees, to hold it there supported

Once more the electrician cut the Old Man short and said:

You are turning it into a song again, beware

The Old Man therefore began once more from the beginning:

In time the world we know will be seen as one

And in it men will move beyond the immoveable and unchanging limits

This is the First and Second Meaning I foresee as I search for good in the future

And thus I foresee the Third Meaning:

Then the immoveable and unchanging limits will move

And a Fourth Meaning:

Then will be seen the unified and infinite variety of this one world and all its interests

Unified the interest of white and yellow men

Unified the interest of men and iron

Unified the interest of architect and mason

Unified the interest of science and poetry

Unified the interest of actor and audience

Unified the interest of learned and simple

Unified the interest of man and woman, man also a woman and woman also a man

By the same Third Meaning I see how work will pin man on one point as sharp and hard as the point of a nail; and work will carry them all over this one world by the unified interest as compact as flowing water

Work will specialise and work will generalise

Play will separate and play will link together

Play and work: neither punishment nor reward but a sequence in this unified world

When limits unchanging and immoveable will change and move

And a Fourth Meaning: when limits move, all will be fed and contained

For men will bend over this one earth and take what they need and rise up satisfied and then move on

They will climb down into the earth and fly to the sky and
RETURN

And this Fifth Meaning: The height and depth and length and
breadth of this earth and its knowledge offered now, not guarded

The world and its knowledge offered and not guarded

And those who know the unified world will live

And those who are focused on limits will fade out

They will burst like fish dragged out of deep waters with no guts
to breathe

All those who cannot grow new guts will vanish

To fulfil what is needed

To fulfil in time at every point and moment until new limits
are shaped

This is the last but one meaning, the Sixth:

New forms and meanings will be shaped upon new limits ful-
filling the needs of the time

Between the old and the new, the east and the west, meanings
and forms will take shape fulfilling what is needed

Turning as summer and winter turn, ruling and receding in time
between the old and the new, the east and the west

And the last meaning, the Seventh, a useful one:

I foresee as a useful and great blessing in this one world the new
shapes and meaning coming from the east

For between east and west, new and old, movement and im-
mobility, are inscribed all meanings and shapes that we know and
suffer and render and foresee

And this unified world we first evoked as a good world, and its
knowledge and the moving of limits and the fulfilment of needs
and the satisfaction and the shaping of new limits and the love of
it, is presaged from the east

Then the Old Man stopped. The electrician told him:

What you say seems sound and beautiful. Yet even so, will your
words reach our friend intact by mouth or paper? It is appropriate
for you to use words, but why not more familiar names of nations
and deeds, virtues and crafts, which explain and carry us nearer the
goal that you've foreseen as good?

The Old Man answered bitterly: You compel me to gather what
cannot be gathered and to take up flowing water in a basket.

The Electrician said: No, I ask you to put the flowing water in a
cup for our refreshing.

And thus it happened that was what to have been said at the Fifth Bridge was said very far from it. Then when the Old Man was compelled by the Electrician to mention nations as examples of what he foresaw, and deeds and virtues and crafts, they returned to Cairo and went to the Sixth Bridge, to carry on their argument

On nations and virtues in relation to the future good: not yet composed

And so they reached the Seventh Bridge, the Geographic

But before they reached it news came that Germany had made war on Soviet Russia

As they heard of it on June 22nd in the morning at the café, the Electrician rose to his feet and shouted: Now the war has a meaning.

And the Old Man said: Now we too shall be soldiers. We too shall become good soldiers.

They went to the home of the kindly whore and wouldn't let her go out anywhere, they stayed there quietly and fraternally shut in the house, their hearts leaping like a fish now and then. Knowing that from the next day and from this doorstep they would walk out into the one road that they had longed to see opening before them, the road that took them from confusion and waiting into action. Their anguish was great for fear that they would not be accepted in the army, for fear they'd be too late. So easily are the brave deceived, as though in one battle all is lost or gained, and they tremble for fear of missing it.

The two friends evoked the infinite country Russia as an ally, and their breasts swelled, and they figured out all the underground movements and tunnels of workers all over the earth, even in the enemy's heart and under his armpits. And they figured and figured out all that had to come together to produce so clear a battle, Communists against Fascists. And they beat their boots in front of the chairs. They began a sentence and didn't finish it. They took the hands of the kindly whore and kissed them, as though she were the holiest of women, and they told her: How can we ever repay what you have done for us? But you'll see what a just war we are now waging and how well we'll fight. And everything will be pure. And they told her to enlist as a nurse. And they hugged her and then left her and picked their minds crumb by crumb in search of all effective tricks to use in case they were turned down for the army. They went and bought a bottle of black hair-dye and dyed the white hair of the Old Man. And this small

action, and everything they did, seemed a just action, which carried them nearer to victory. And whenever the thought of death came to them, death in this war, they were uplifted as though by a threshing of wings: the same joy, but quickening. Thus it is that many who fight come on death with light hearts.

From that moment the Old Man is lost. His name is not found attached to his body. Some people who knew him circulated stories that he went into the army and was secret adviser in many matters that were reminiscent of his own doings and sayings. With the Electrician. That was the story that went round.

The author is in Greece and therefore cannot be named. The work is a long one—here the opening two passages from near the middle, and the end, have been translated from the Greek by
JACK LINDSAY.

LETTERS FROM GREEK PRISONS

(1) THEMOS CORNAROS: FROM MISSOLOGHI PRISON

(Cornaros was born in hardship in the hills of Crete. He fell in love with a well-to-do girl, who laughed at him. He set off wandering; sold cigarettes in the ports, worked as miner, printer, sailor. One day he heard that the girl was sick, and hurried home to Crete. There they told him that she had gone to the Isle of Spinalonga. He went there too and found her a leper, unrecognisable. In pity he wrote his book about the Isle of Lepers, the burnt-out deathly rocks and the unnecessary vileness of the conditions. Then in disquiet of soul he went to the Monasteries of Athos, but found no release there. Coming back to the towns, he wrote a book on the monks, which the Church banned. Then in 1936 he was jailed by the Metaxas dictatorship, but released in time to work in the underground press against the Nazis. Betrayed, he was put in the concentration camp of Haidari. Freed in 1946, he wrote his powerful book on this camp, on the sufferings and heroism of the prisoners. His freedom lasted 52 days. He was arrested and put into another concentration camp as soon as the guerilla resistance began. This time he was guarded by British soldiers. In this camp, near Phalerus, he refused even a blanket and lay on the earth. Then he was handed over to the police and jailed for seven months. When he came out, he wrote a pamphlet exposing a collaborator with the Nazis, a Bishop, and was at once re-arrested. Tried in the autumn of 1946, he was not allowed to use the mass of factual evidence

he had brought into court, and has been in jail or concentration camp ever since. In December 1946, he smuggled out of jail the letter translated below. Ironically, it came from Missolonghi, the place of Byron's death in the cause of a free Greece. Shortly after, he was removed to Pyrges in the Peloponnesus, and faded from our sight.)

From the Prison of Missolonghi, 2nd December, 1946.

To the Holy Synod, to the Academy of Athens, to the Associations of Journalists, to the Union of Greek Writers, to the Associations of Doctors and Lawyers, to the Society for the Protection of Dumb Animals.

Gentlemen,

The prison in which I am jailed lies in an area submitted to "Exceptional Measures." If it were only through professional duty, I hold myself obliged to make known all I have been able personally to verify, to the spiritual representatives of my country, those who are alone qualified before History.

Today "a group of bandits" have been brought into my prison, destined for Missolonghi Concentration Camp. Twenty-three men and one woman—and so the newspapers tomorrow will announce that "the band X has been exterminated; twenty-four prisoners have been made, who have confessed this and that, etcetra."

That is above all what preoccupies me: for you will later read of these matters, and it is on the basis of "written testimonies" that you will write history. Thus, without intention and in ignorance, you are going to falsify the real history of our times.

Well, here is the witness of my own eyes. Listen to what I can tell you of this group.

All were arrested in their homes. Only after their arrest were all the stage-props of their group-activity got

together, their leader, the battlefield, and the indispensable loot. Those are the "proofs" which will soon be sent on to the Court Martial to provide versimilitude and correctness to the judgment. For what tribunal does not consider "proof" as the criterion of truth?

The security-police of the State have set themselves to produce before the tribunal all these "irrefutable proofs." For a fortnight they have held the "guilty," and have talked with them. There is no longer any need to demonstrate the "truth." Some bandits whose "memory" is better will have contributed to it.

I ask you to do whatever is needed to make the State send doctors and psychiatrists to verify the condition of these men—whether they are in a fit state to make free statements, whether they are speaking truth or falsehood. Because, regarding them, I have a contrary opinion, but I lack the requisite qualifications.

What do I see?

Bodies burned with petrol, enflamed eyes, puffed-up faces, pulped brows, feet so swollen that the toes can't be distinguished, and what is worse, brains affected, delirious groanings all night . . .

These wounds have not been gained in fighting. They are deliberated inflicted wounds, caused during the removal to the Bureau of Instruction, which is called in prison language the Torture Cell. The men were kept there a fortnight without the least medical attention. The authorities

waited till they resumed a more or less human appearance before transferring them to the prison.

You must ask judges, jurists, psychiatrists, psychologists, to state their opinion when a man is capable of making a deposition which contains the truth: When he has the enjoyment of his limbs and is in good health? or rather when he has undergone the most atrocious sufferings and his body is no more than a corpse? I assert that it is not necessary to wait till the wounds heal before seeking out the truth, if indeed that is what concerns us and not something else. I believe that you are in the position—if you wish it—to take your part in establishing the truth about these twenty-four peaceful and delirious corpses.

Only, it must be done within twenty-four hours if you wish to see in time the marks of our “civilisation” and some specimens of these terrible “bandits” whose execution you will perhaps learn of tomorrow. For so have decided the men truly guilty of the misfortunes of our country. They have

decided to colonise this land by furious savages who know how to transform the human body into a pulp in order to tread underfoot all truth and all moral values.

As for the proofs of guilt, I am ready to trust in a small child’s judgment. It would be enough for him to see the corpses who have made the alleged confessions.

Gentlemen, I beg you in the name of civilisation to turn your thoughts to the life of the people living in our country’s hell. I confide to your conscience the safeguarding of the real history of our land. I hand over to your protection the men of this country which the jungle is submerging. Abandon all that divides you, to carry out your duty towards our nation, civilisation, humanity, truth.

You are able to do it.

But if you wish to close your ears, at least notify the Society for the Protection of Dumb Animals. Perhaps it will take as much interest in men as it takes in a dog. For I, from my prison, can do no more.

(2) CHRISTOS CARAMPELOS: TWO LETTERS

(Christos Carampelos, a young Greek writer, was shot on June 25th, 1948. With the poet Dimitri Lagos, he had been shut for five months in the concentration camp island of Psytallia. After torture, he was tried before a court-martial and shot. Among his works were treatises on the History and Methodology of Economics, and he left unfinished studies of the origin of the family and of ancient music. With him was shot Lagos, author of several books of poetry, Fertile Melancholy, Between Yes and No, and Fire and its Scents. Lagos was working on a translation of French poems, and had completed the section on Baudelaire, when he was arrested. He cried out in the court-martial, “All my life I have loved only truth, and I have proclaimed it in my poems in the same way as I have sung my country.” In Easter managed to smuggle out a letter to his friends. This and the brief note

which he scribbled the night before he was shot are translated below.)

EASTER LETTER

Nowadays, however intolerable is reality, my thought continually bursts its confines, takes flight across the moment, and is lost, within me, in an infinite space outside time.

I am not an egoist, I deny the charge, at least as far as I am aware of myself. Whatever it is, I feel contented in my inner being each time I return from my escape, for I return more closely attached to life, to all I love. Reality becomes a friend for me, since it is the point-of-departure for my thoughts. Its actual quality does not concern me; what concerns me is the quality of the thoughts that it begets in me.

My escape depends on my will; but all the while time goes on with its regular beat, and without difficulty I pass from one state to the other, without breaking the thread that unites them. At each instant the past is fused with the present, they make a gift to me of all that has been my life up till today, while I advance firmly towards the future.

The future does not trouble me, for I have found its element to a considerable extent in the past. Chance events won't astonish me. The past has always taught me that the unexpected is an element belonging to the future.

Don't think that I neglect Easter here, that I do not enjoy it. On the contrary. I keep its festival, I too, I

enjoy it, and I want you to believe me happy at this moment. I pass through a purification which gives its nobility to all things, a nobility in the full measure of a man. The human being keeps his qualities, I want to believe, in all circumstances, and since I too am a human being, I am sure of myself.

I send you all my good wishes, all my thoughts, entangled as they are; and with my whole heart I give you an Easter Greeting.

TO MY FRIENDS

Man differs from beasts in possessing reason. The Greeks understood its power and were the first who used reason to explain the world.

That is why I am happy to be a Greek.

Man in his relations with nature makes enormous steps forward, and ends, through the sole instrument of reason, by mastering nature to a great extent. Man in his relations with society does no other wise. Yet society perhaps causes him greater ills even than nature can.

Let us strive to understand this apparent weakness of men.

Onward, all of us, to social studies, to a correct and correctly applied sociological science.

There is what I have based myself on. Judge my errors find what is true in my thought. That is what I ask of you. I greet you all.

GUILLEVIC: NOVEL OR EPIC

Translated from the French by A.L.

In conversation I keep on arguing against the general confusion between Novel and Epic. A book, I think, is an Epic and not a Novel when, first, the true subject of the action and the work is a

people, a nation. Next, when the action of this people, this nation, is exalted, when it merges into the historical perspective of the liberation of man, that liberation itself being exalted in a more or less open way. Agreed, that is very summary and inadequate as a definition. So let us take an example, out of recent books. *The Dyke of Volokotamsk*, by Alexander Beck, is not a novel but an epic.

Such a distinction, it will be argued, is scholastic and unimportant. But that is a mistake. The distinction is big with consequences. For a Novel and an Epic need a different sort of language, a different tone, a different method of advancing facts, and, in my opinion, a different way of seeing, of regarding the action's protagonists. More (and this seems to me essential) Time has a quite different incidence, and, I'm tempted to add, a different consistency, in novel and epic. Will I be understood if I say that in the epic, as in every poem. Time has a vertical movement, while in the novel it moves horizontally? That's an image I use to express a reality difficult to analyse. Has it validity for others beside myself?

Well, we are in the epoch of the epic. There's no need, I think, to labour that point.

Although Melpo Axioti's book bears on its cover the description *Novel*, it is truly and overbrimmingly an epic, in the sense I have given the term, and with the characters necessary to an epic. *20th Century* is the story of a young Greek girl, Polyxena, and her requited love for Emile. But it is also the story of Greek Resistance, unique, successively directed against the tyrants, the aggressors and the oppressors, the dictatorship of Metaxas, the Mussolinian invasion, the Hitlerian invasion and oppression, the aggression and

oppression by the "Allies." A unique and varied Resistance against a varied and unique enemy, Fascism.

Polyxena relives her own story and the story of the Resistance and her People, this night, the last night of all. The attic-window is still dark, but it grows light little by little. When the full dawn comes, she'll be shot. Still a few moments to see again how it all was.

O, the story is a simple thing. Polyxena, daughter of a well-off musician, one day meets Emile, son of the poverty-stricken Salome. She loves him. He disappears. Arrested, deported, fugitive, always struggling. He loves Polyxena. Polyxena gives herself to her lover and the underground struggle. She swears to herself, "till death." The two lovers have only the rarest of meetings, for a few moments, when the struggle permits. And then it is such a happiness. A great love, so pure and tragic, merged with their love for their people and for liberty. A true love, such as is known only to *those who live*.

Yes, history is a simple thing.

Melpo Axioti, as I've said, chooses the way of the epic poet. But I must mention also her humility before the great deeds that she recounts, and the grandeur, the discretion and purity with which she sets forth the most atrocious and horrible things: utter hardship, hunger, massacre. Listen:

"This was the moment when the foreign patrols traversed the streets. Their boots went clomp clomp, knocking on the ground. They inspected the crossroads. And they went into the houses, these uniformed strangers. We saw them at night hung at windows as at the heart and knees of women, begging a little love. These men who hunted love off the earth would have liked

it in their bed. The first ones to refuse their bodies were the prostitutes."

And this:

"Suddenly, the door burst roughly open and a dishevelled woman came in. She held out her bloodied palms and cried, "Look, it's the blood of my Alekos. I've taken it up all mixed with earth from the place where he fell, and I want to feed on it." She licked her hands. Then all the women dropped on

to their knees and said prayers."

Narrative where the tragic is constantly present. Present and upheld by hope, and, yes, by joy: the joy of those who have given themselves to what is good. I have forgotten to add that this epic tale sticks to daily life, is realistic, made up of a series of accounts of day-to-day life in Athens. O, the blood of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles still flows in the Greek people. Greece is a great country which will be free and radiant, soon.

SÖREN KIERKEGAARD AND OUR TIME

I. *The reputation*

For more than half a century after the death of Kierkegaard his world of thought was almost completely unknown outside Scandinavia. Only in Germany a few related spirits had found their way to him, such as Schrempf, who translated his works, and Haecker, whose *Søren Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit* appeared one year before the first World War and became of great importance for the valuation of Kierkegaard in post-war Germany. When, in the beginning of that work, Haecker writes, "It may be considered a special act of Providence that this ominous figure was born in little Denmark, and in Copenhagen there, as Socrates in Athens, at a fateful moment in the history of Europe, which is now slowly integrating his life-work," he has put his finger on the process which the following thirty years have witnessed.

During the twenties, Kierkegaard's ideas spread like a prairie fire all over Germany. Karl Barth is deeply influenced by them. "If I have a system," he says, "it condenses down

to the fact that I obstinately keep an eye on what Kierkegaard calls the infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity." Kierkegaard's conception of man in his relation to God is reflected in Winkler, Hirsch, Bultmann, Brunner and Gogarten. And when Rudolf Otto, the author of *Das Heilige*—the most remarkable religious work Germany has produced in the inter-war period—defines "das heilige" as a "mysterium tremendum et fascinansum," we find, once more, a reflection of Kierkegaard's definition of *angst* as "a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy."

However, it was not merely the theologians who were impressed by the ideas of Kierkegaard. Barth's scepticism towards "the system" finds its counterpart everywhere in contemporary philosophy. Tired of systems and speculations, the philosopher, realising himself as an existent creature, becomes conscious (in Kierkegaard's words) that there is one little thing from which the speculating Heer professor cannot abstract, when everything else has been abstracted away, viz. the speculating Heer professor himself. But the Germans would not

be Germans, if they had not succeeded in building a new system on the understanding that you cannot build a system at all.

At the beginning of the new century German philosophy, independently of Kierkegaard, is being penetrated by simpler existentialist ideas, as in Troeltsch, Dilthey and Simmel. It is not until the arrival of the so-called *phenomenological* school that an influence in the proper sense of the word is felt. Not in the founder of the school, Husserl, who had satisfied himself with the somewhat empty Kantian *ratio* and the amorphous *life* of the neo-romantics, but in his pupils.

Jaspers has taken the same starting point for his philosophy, but confronts the christinity of Kierkegaard with the atheism of Nietzsche: "As against religion and atheism the philosopher lives on his own creed." According to Jaspers, Kierkegaard is the sole exception, who as such has obtained a unique insight, but who cannot serve as a model. The task of contemporary philosophy is to answer the question "how we must live, we who are not the exception and who try, with our eyes turned towards the exception, to find our inner way."

While Jaspers, as a genuine pupil of Kierkegaard, claimed to the last that a system of existence was unimaginable, Heidegger is more optimistic; he has transgressed the problems of phenomenology and transferred them into a universal ontology, a logic of existence, which realises itself (as Heidegger has it in his German) through "ein Durchsichtigmachen eines Seienden in seinem Sein."

The conflict between the arch-German desire for systematisation and the Kierkegaardian realisation of the impossibility of creating a system of existence is seen in several of the

thinkers from the twenties, such as Fr. Heinemann, who is preponderantly systematician, but who none-the-less considered Kierkegaard "den Umkehrpunkt in der Entwicklung des neuzeitlichen Menschen" (*Neue Wege der Philosophie*); Chr. Schrepff, who draws the last consequences of Kierkegaard's points of view, throwing aside the Christian dogmatism as empty speculation. (Sören Kierkegaard, 1929); and Griesebach who (in *Wahrheit und Wirklichkeit*, 1919) had figured as a Hegelian systematician but later experienced a crisis, the outcome of which has been laid down in *Die Grenzen des Erziehers und sein Verantwortlichkeit* (1924) and *Gegenwart, eine kritische Ethik* (1928). In these works he turns against idealistic systematicism in the discovery of the meaninglessness of the systems for the practical world and for ethical reality. Proper ethical work must be cleaned of all speculations and built on a realistic conception of existence. Griesebach's critical existentialism is built directly on Kierkegaard.

About 1930 the reputation of Kierkegaard reached France. Here the ground had been prepared by two great philosophers, first by Bergson, one of the founders of modern irrationalism, both in his time—philosophy, which introduces subjective elements into our empirical world, and in his concept of the *élan vital*, which leaves open the possibility of God as an *ultima ratio*; later by Maurice Blondel, the Catholic philosopher, who built on the axiom: to be is to act, each philosophy is a philosophy of acting. He rejects all scientific practices in a much more summary way than even Kierkegaard ever did, and substitutes for it the *élan spirituel*, the divine inspiration. God loves the empty vessels—in order to fill them with his eternal presence,

his strength and his light.

Blondel has scarcely known Kierkegaard's works; the unquestionable parallels and similarities found between them must be sought via Pascal, the great model of Blondel and the one who is most congenial with Kierkegaard on the whole of philosophical world-literature. But the thoughts that Bergson and Blondel had begun to spread stirred the interest in similar ideas from Germany, and caused an increasing study of Jaspers, Heidegger, and Scheler, through whom the French discovered Kierkegaard.

Gabriel Marcel, whose *Journal Métaphysique* appeared in the same year as Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* is the main representative of religious existentialism in France, as Sartre is of the irreligious existentialism. There is great similarities between Marcel and Kierkegaard, but there is no evidence that Marcel has been more familiar with the Danish thinker than has Blondel, and in France it is almost exclusively the irreligious existentialists who refer to Kierkegaard, whose absolute insistence on human freedom and responsibility they have carried to extreme consequences.

The first ever to have used the expression *existential* seems to have been the Norwegian poet Welhaven in a conversation with the Danish philosopher Sibbern, a contemporary of Kierkegaard. Sibbern himself says: "One day I met young Kierkegaard in The Old Square, and he asked me: 'What is the relation between philosophy and reality?' The question struck me, as all my philosophy was directed towards the study of reality and life; but later on I had to admit that to a Hegelian thinker the question was natural enough, as the Hegelians did not study philosophy *existentially*, to use an expression by Welhaven,

when I talked with him once about philosophy." This is the first time the expression is ever used in literature. The first to use it in France was Hamelin, more than forty years ago; his anti-Hegelian dialectic, directed against the Neo-Hegelianism which was appearing in several countries about the beginning of the new century, exerted an influence among his pupils, of whom the best known are Alain, Parodi, and Le Senne. It is possible to discern one remarkable feature in the adherents of the school. Like Kierkegaard they are anti-Hegelians, because they are adversaries of idealism with its systematisation, which keeps forgetting the human aspect. And like Kierkegaard they proceed through purely abstract categories. They will know nothing of the science because the sciences disturb their circles. But because of that, their logic becomes a logic without concrete data, a merely internal movement the self-analysis of "pure consciousness." Therefore, when they talk of personality, man, or existence as the keystone of their dialectical logic, they have been unable to put anything into that keystone except what they started with, Pure Consciousness.

Thus, existentialism becomes nothing but a smoke screen, which conceals the fact that they have returned to the idealism they have gone out to slay. Existentialism is idealism in disguise.

This line of thought receives its most outspoken expression in Leon Brunschvicg's philosophy. Brunschvicg is a critical rationalist and sceptic. He dismisses Hamelin's dialectic as a childish myth, dispairs of rational deductions as well as the value of our empirical knowledge. Existence is not even, as in Hamelin's thought, something mental, but only a pattern of mathematical nature. He reduces

existence to nothing, *l'être* and *le néant* are fundamentally the same thing.

And then, having reduced everything *in absurdum*, he retracts his own statement. In *La Raison et la Religion* (1939) he builds consciously and consistently on a dualistic conception of life, mating his rationalistic scepticism with a spiritualistic conception of intuition as God's self-revelation in man, a conception which opens the door to the world of mysticism, where God and man are fused together. "God is thus," he claims, "that we cannot conceive ourselves as different from Him, as little as He is different from us." The rigorous epistemologist, who has reduced everything to nothing, thus painlessly re-establishes everything by an act which is outside of the sphere of thought. "Our thought, on its way forward, discovers a focus in our minds, where intelligence and love appear in the radiance of their light: God is that in us which loves!" Consequently for Brunschvicg the scope of philosophy is to re-establish the synthesis of thought and intuition, which has been lost for mankind, to fuse speculative idealism with Christian spiritualism, and to linger existentially in the love of God. Again, in these thoughts one can trace the influence of Pascal, the French Kierkegaard, to whom Brunschvicg has devoted an intense study, and whose works he has edited.

The case of Brunschvicg reveals that the postulate proposed above, that existentialism is idealism in disguise, is not an exhaustive definition. While original idealism had an objective character, as in Hegel, who thought that he could develop the totality of existence "aus dem Inneren seines Bewusstseins heraus," modern idealism is based on the Kierkegaardian formula: Subjectivity is truth! Sub-

jectivity is the starting point, faith the consummation of this line of thought. Consequently, existentialism is idealism in its fideistic stage.

It makes no difference that there is an irreligious existentialism represented by the much-advertised novelist, playwright and philosopher, Sartre. He produces the negative proof of the fundamental truth of the postulate. In his philosophical *chef d'œuvre*, *L'Être et le Néant* he carries Brunschvicg's sceptical rationalism to its logical conclusion—without making the leap into fideism. But for that very reason the causal, regulated world crumples to pieces for him, and he can only perceive an incidental, unconnected and completely superfluous existence. Nausea and disgust are the feelings this existence breeds in man.

It is a significant fact that both believing and atheistic existentialists now fetch their ammunition from Kierkegaard, and that, among the believers, it is particularly the Catholics whose scholastic heritage make them specially fit to appreciate the Kierkegaardian dialectics. The Catholic study of Kierkegaard, from Przywara to Paul Petit is a chapter of its own. Petit only just succeeded in finishing his translation (the second in French) of *Philosophical Fragments*, before he was arrested by the Germans in 1942, accused of illegal presswork, and imprisoned in Fresnes, where he wrote an introduction to his translation and had it smuggled out, before he was transferred to Germany, where he was executed in Cologne on August 24th, 1944.

In England, Kierkegaard was introduced during the thirties through German and French translations. Aldous Huxley and T. S. Eliot adopted him already at the beginning of the decade, Herbert Read (*Annals of Inno-*

cence and Experience) and Auden at the beginning of the war, Cyril Connolly and M. C. D'Arcy (*The Mind and Heart of Love*) after the war. These three pairs of authors once again reflect the continual distinction between Kierkegaard's religious and irreligious admirers and D'Arcy the particularly Catholic nuance.

2. *The man*

A passage of Kierkegaard's diary from 1850 runs, "A rigorous education it is, that one from innate *angst* (dread) to faith." That is Kierkegaard's own formula for the progress of his life.

Angst, he says, is the expression of man's realisation of self, when he becomes conscious of his position in life and understands that he is situated at the point of intersection between two worlds, that of nature and that of spirit. It depends on the free choice of man, whether he will step from the purely natural and causal sphere into that of freedom and spirit. *Angst* is the hesitation, which precedes the decisive action, by which man confirms himself as a spiritual entity or stays behind in the animal unfreedom of the natural condition.

The choice is the basic problem of human existence, as *Angst* is its basic emotion and its patent of nobility, which marks it out as predestined to participate in a higher world. The Christian view of life, the dualism of which has always endowed it with a dramatic tenor, reaches a unique intensity in the Kierkegaardian dialectic.

The dialectic tension, the innate *angst*, becomes visible early in Kierkegaard's life and gets its concrete starting point in his relationship to his parents, to the sexually aggressive and guilty father and the subdued and scared mother. The primitive and healthy sensuality of the father had to

be overcompensated by a strong religiosity, hostile to life, which he transferred to the son. The span between the two poles, that of sensuality and that of spirit, were recognised by Kierkegaard in the reality of *angst*, and on this recognition he built his religious understanding and his work. From innate *angst* to *angst*. . . .

Kierkegaard himself has very clearly understood the fateful influence of his father, he talks about "the *angst* with which my father filled my soul." But he defines *angst* as "a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy," i.e. as attraction and repulsion, love and hate at the same time, and he has turned both of these feelings towards his father. From earliest childhood he has directed his whole instinctive life towards his father and thus derailed the normal development of the child, which is directed by both parents, so that it took on an unconsciously homosexual character. While the mother was not much more than a maid in the home, the boy developed into the spiritual companion of the father, his spiritual spouse. Hence the ambivalent attitude towards the father. For in the same degree as young Kierkegaard in his relation to the latter could identify himself with his mother, he could spontaneously project his love on to the father; but in the same degree as he insisted on his relation to his mother as that of a son, he was led to hate his father, who disturbed this relation, and consequently something aggressive entered into their relationship, which caused several conflicts. They did not cease until the death of the old man, which meant his definite victory over the son, who was from now on bound to fulfil the life-pattern he had created. "Now it is not any longer passible to cheat the old man,"

Kierkegaard writes. The engagement to Regina indicates an endeavour to sneak away from the father and was accordingly a failure; the homosexual bond proved too strong.

From now on his life and work describe a straight course. The relation to the father is projected upon greater things, the ambivalence and the aggressiveness are transferred to the changing father-imagoes, which he encounters later in life, Hegel, Mynster, Martensen, and finally God Himself. The writings taken together indicate a gigantic effort to overcome the contradictions in these great father-objects, which have arisen out of the basic ambivalence, an effort that takes the shape of self-analysis and autotherapy at the same time.

In his struggle against the Hegelian system, Kierkegaard has formulated the problem of existentialism in classical way and brought his opposition to a head in claiming that subjectivity is truth. This means the rebellion of the son against the father. It is a remarkable fact that at the same time as Kierkegaard prepared his passionate attack on Hegel's idealism, the system was attacked from another side by a man who, like Kierkegaard, was both Hegel's pupil and opponent, a rebellious son, Karl Marx. Each man attacked the system from his own side. Marx applied the method, the dialectic, and made it of use by giving it a fully materialistic or organic basis. He rebuilt the system, not out of pure being (which is pure nothing), but out of the multiplicity of concrete data which constitute existence; and remodelled it into a useful weapon. Kierkegaard used the method to demonstrate its inner untenability and the untenability of the system as well. His victorious dialectic crushed Hegel's idealism and almost tore

Christianity down with it. All dogmas and conventions fell, so that nothing was left but the absolute paradox, man and god in one person, the eternal being in time, the pure in the guise of sin. This paradox can never be understood (his dialectic insisted), only acquired by faith.

Marx, in order to obtain a liberating completion of the dialectical method, presupposed a thoroughgoing study of nature and society: Kierkegaard built on the guilt and *angst* which he had inherited from his father. He never dreamt of studying nature. The realm of the spirit was his reality. He sweeps the sciences aside impatiently, scornfully:—

"In our time it is the sciences which are dangerous. In the end physiology will spread to such an extent that it will swallow ethics altogether. . . . A physiologist undertakes to explain man as a whole. This is the question of *principiis obsta*: what is that to me? What do I need to know about the centripetal and centrifugal circulation in the nerves, about the circulation of the blood, about the microscopic condition of the embryo. Ethics has problems enough for me. . . . Let us take problems as freedom and necessity. Then let physiology begin to explain everything about the way in which the circulation of the blood in a special way is influencing this and that, etc., etc.—in the end he cannot explain that freedom is fancy. After having written his four volumes full of figures and curiosities he must say: but at the last explanation wonder stops short. Why, then, all this knowledge? Is it not a cheat, is it not to deprive man of his enthusiasm and keep him in suspense in the expectation that one day, when they have constructed

still larger microscopes, they will succeed in discovering that freedom was an illusion and that everything was a natural function?

"All knowledge has something fascinating, but . . . ethics is an enemy of a knowledge which, after having taken a man's whole life, ends by saying that, after all, it is not possible to explain the most important fact.

"Let us imagine the greatest criminal who ever lived, and then that physiology by that time has got a pair of even more wonderful spectacles on its nose than before, so that it can explain the criminal: that his brain had been too little, that it all was due to natural necessity, etc.—what a horror at such an acquittal in comparison with the sentence of Christianity over him that he would go to Hell, if he was not converted."

In these lines Kierkegaard has anticipated a development which at his time was only in its beginning—and rejected it. The words just quoted indicate the greatest possible contrast to Marx and, generally speaking, to the preliminaries of science. And still the effects of the two men's philosophical contributions were not quite so different in some respects as one would expect. Marx unconditionally rejected religion. Kierkegaard rejected the Church and revealed Christianity. It was not his job to propagate Christianity, but on the contrary to make it more difficult to be a Christian by emphasising the religious claims, what it means to be a Christian and not a chatterbox. By that he has succeeded in weakening the Church and promoting the internal dissolution of the Protestant Church, which has been going on since Luther's days. He demonstrated the depend-

ence of the Church on the bourgeois class and the bourgeois state, and has forced several sincere spirits out of the Church.

The attack on the Church belongs to the last phase of Kierkegaard's life, when at last he had reached something of a feeling of internal stability. The greater part of his life, however, was marked by extreme insecurity and by the *angst* and guilt, which were the necessary consequences of his ambivalent attitude towards his father. To overcome these weaknesses was the essential meaning of Kierkegaard's work. The progressive self-analysis, which is one aspect of his total work, has naturally been stamped by his special points of view, his starting point and his terminology, but it contains all the germs of modern psycho-analysis. Kierkegaard is the first great psycho-analyst of world literature, closely followed by Nietzsche and Dostoevski. Freud is only the third generation. But it is with Kierkegaard as with so many other pioneers, who broke the pathway, but whose findings have not been immediately applicable. Like Moses he was only allowed to behold the Promised Land.

Because he had only a foreboding of the road to his own cure, but was not able to follow it to its termination; and because he could not extinguish his *angst*, his guilt, his loneliness, his aggression, his death-instinct, Kierkegaard's view of life and man condensed into a comprehensive *pessimism* and concept of man as fundamentally wicked. His repressed feelings and instincts prevented regeneration and deformed his outlook.

3. *Time, reputation, and man*

Three great names gleam on the horizon of the inter-war years; besides Kierkegaard, Dostoevski and Kafka.

Different, as were their forms of expression, they were linked by a strange likeness in their way of putting problems, and in their atmosphere and style of life. Man-existing was the sole object of their thought and writing. For the understanding of man-existing they all possessed extraordinary powers of psychological penetration and at the same time—a thing which distinguishes them—a keen consciousness of the fundamental insufficiency of psychology in dealing with the life of the spirit. Psychology belongs to the sphere of nature and animal determination, Kierkegaard maintains; but in the world of the spirit, for which man opts by a free act, he has raised himself above all natural determination and, accordingly, above the limits of psychology. Even if perhaps psychology can describe the state of spiritual man, the decisive jump itself into a new quality is beyond its scope.

The same idea lies behind Dostoevski's descriptions of the soul, in which the sources of religion pour forth in a way unacceptable to rational psychology. "People call me a psychologist," he said, "but that is not right. I am only a realist in a higher sense, i.e. I expose all the depths of the human soul." For him, as for Kierkegaard, there is a religious reality outside and beyond all human experience, which is the marginal definition of psychology and the motivation of spiritual man.

If the reality of the spiritual or religious world is insisted on with sufficient passion as reality proper, the natural world, normal reality, sinks gradually down into an inferior plane, where it adopts a phantom-like, half dream-like character. This is seen both in Kierkegaard and Dostoevski, but nowhere more clearly than in Kafka,

whose sole poetical object is the ordinary world, which takes the shape of a hallucination or a nightmare. No wonder that dream symbolism and dream logic become the methods making it possible for him to reproduce his impressions of life. As the dream compares with ordinary reality, so the latter compares with religious or spiritual reality. This is his working hypothesis. Peculiar to him, and what distinguishes him from Kierkegaard and Dostoevski, is that he can nowhere see any glimpse of a spiritual break-through into a higher reality. We are the slaves of this world of illusion, and there is no hope of salvation. The human beings are God's perverse thoughts, which are excreted from his being and hurled into the abyss, he says in one of his works. Kafka is a believer who believes in everything except salvation.

It cannot be a mere coincidence, when the present age has elected three such personalities for its lodestars. They agree in their aversion from all speculative systematicism, in their intense consciousness of existence (their existentialism), their hovering about the problem of absolute freedom versus animal determinism, their pessimism, their *angst*, their guilt, their despair.

When the age has elected three such figures, it must, of course, be due to the fact, that it can see its own features in them as in a mirror. It was almost at the same time that Kierkegaard and Dostoevski swooped down on emaciated Europe like two large birds of prey. What Haecker's book had done for Kierkegaard in 1913, Middleton Murry's did for Dostoevski in 1917 and even more Thurneysen's in 1915. The latter is provided with a motto by Kierkegaard—the two seemed linked together from the very begin-

ning. But in the first round it was only in the Germany of defeat and despair that they caught on. The cultural optimism, which had been too prevalent in Germany since the beginning of the century, turned into its opposite; and when also the revolutionary expectations had been extinguished in the sad compromise of the Weimar republic, minds were ripe for Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes*—and for Kierkegaard.

In the twenties the Danish thinker was almost completely unknown outside Germany and Scandinavia. The objective conditions for his ideas were still not present in the rest of the world; and indeed, by the end of the decade his influence seemed to be decreasing in the same degree as the general crisis of Germany seemed to be on the decline and the economic situation improving. All over Europe a certain insecure prosperity was gaining ground, crystallising in a rapidly spreading philosophical idealism. The extreme German phenomenology calmed down in French Catholic casuistry in the works of Blondel and Maritain; in a somewhat religiously-tainted faith in evolution, particularly in Bergson's pupils, such as Edouard I Roy; or in the mild relativism of the sociological School. In England the "Holists" and Whitehead led the way to Eddington's and James Jeans' pseudo-religious (and pseudo-scientific) speculations, and to Sullivan's proclamation of indeterminism.

But by the beginning of the thirties everything was immediately changed. The economic world-crisis, which swept over the world, once more took the ground away from under naive idealism. The philosophical as well as the economic systems were shaken to their foundations; each of them had either to relapse into destructive pes-

simism, or go into action and be rejuvenated under the changed conditions. As Roosevelt's New Deal and Hitler's Nazism were different forms in which capitalism passed into the new chrysalis state during this thunder storm, *existentialism* is the form in which traditional idealism pupates and survives. Both recognise the arch enemy on the left, in Marxism. As European reaction, when on the defence, develops into something new, something worse than it had been, i.e. into authoritarian Nazism, classical idealism develops in the same way from philosophy into religion: *existentialism is idealism in its fideistic stage, as Nazism is capitalism in its monopolistic stage.*

In 1931 Andre Lalande declared in a speech at the *Académie des Sciences* that science and religion were on the point of finding each other, and the year after Hitler's seizure of power Brunschvicg proclaimed at the international congress of philosophy at Prague: "To learn to think is the same thing as to love," while Le Senne writes: "The postulate that nothing exists by the spirit, is complemented by the postulate that everything has been created by a prime spirit, that is central and universal and the origin of everything that exists or will come into existence. A spirit of which ours is and can only be an emanation, a participation, so that for us there may quite easily be something external without there being such a thing for the absolute spirit" (*Introduction à la philosophie*, 1939).

It is this idealistic-fideistic background which explains why Kierkegaard's existentialism was bound to have such an overwhelming importance. In his struggle against the Hegelian system and in his maintenance of a philosophy of absolute freedom as opposed to scientific

concepts of growth it was possible to find an arsenal of arguments and a dialectical stringency which could be of immediate use.

However, this alone would not be sufficient to explain the violent breakthrough of Kierkegaard's thoughts during the thirties. As already mentioned, what was peculiar for him, as for Dostoevski and Kafka, was not only his way of viewing the problems, but also his atmosphere and style of life. Here is something which reaches beyond the sphere of the philosophers and theologians, and concerns everybody. The atmosphere of the thirties derived its special flavour from the political situation and the world-crisis, which had developed monopolistic, parasitic, and aggressive forms, of which bourgeois liberalism and old-style capitalism were as, or almost as, suspicious as of the democratic forces. But they felt themselves impotent, because their only chance of damming up world Fascism consisted in co-operation with the democratic forces, which was beyond their capability. It forced them to take a decision. It forced them to make a *choice*. For or against Fascism. For or against Democracy. Confronted with this alternative bourgeois liberal capitalism splits up, and the masses are drawn irresistibly towards total war. They are swallowed up by *angst* and *pessimism*, and, as they become conscious of having missed the opportunity of changing the historical process, they are seized with a feeling of *guilt* and, when they see that everything is lost, with that illness-unto-death that is called *despair*. This is the psychological history of Western Europe from the Reichtags-fire to Munich and Godsberg.

But it is exactly these four things, pessimism, *angst*, guilt and despair,

which are the elements of Kierkegaard's life. He, who lived his whole life in a small attic in one of the narrow bystreets of Copenhagen, pondering over a broken engagement, became one hundred years later, the exponent of the millions in Europe who are passively suffering. If we stick to his definition of *angst*, which is something more than fear or apprehension, and which indicates the situation and hesitation of the human psyche before an act and a choice, the choice which determines, whether man will make up his mind to follow the call of the spirit and to enter the realm of freedom, or if he prefers to remain in animal determination,—if we stick to this definition, which is something fundamental in Kierkegaard's concept of life, the similarity becomes even more apparent. The *angst* of the civilised European then becomes the dread at being confronted with the fateful alternative between remaining in the grip of the blind forces of nature, as they express themselves in the collective ferocity of Fascism and the impersonal and blind dynamics of Capitalism, or of joining the constructive forces of world-democracy, which alone will be able to end the destructive forces of Fascism and Capitalism.

By voting for un-freedom, by remaining within natural determinism, European man has renounced his cultural mission and given himself up to the blind forces, to ferocity and destruction. His *angst*, therefore, when he realises what has happened, becomes *despair*, a condition which portends the death of all the creative and positive forces, and in which man, as it were, tries to get rid of himself. Despair, in as much as it is allowed to predominate, means the capitulation of the constructive, positive forces before

the blind, destructive instincts, of life before death.

This stage indicates the collapse of the European spirit and civilisation—to the extent and degree that it has missed its choice and gives itself up to despair. The stage of despair, which one might call the situation of the moment, has had its most extreme expression so far in the ideas of Sartre. Disgust of existence, *nausea*, is the basic feeling in Sartre's works, in which existence is described as completely meaningless. In this world of meaningless incidents man is placed with full freedom to form his own existence (and therefore also that of others). No doubt he has learnt from Kierkegaard's concept of *angst*, the choice and freedom in the world of the spirit; but whereas Kierkegaard (from his own preliminaries) was fully entitled to postulate the possibility of freedom, this possibility becomes for Sartre, who has renounced the religious premises, an unfounded postulate, a caprice.

For Sartre a meaningless thing, for Kierkegaard a necessity. When, in his argument with science Kierkegaard writes: "Let us imagine the greatest criminal who ever lived, and then that physiology by that time has got a pair of even more wonderful spectacles on its nose than before, so that it can explain the criminal: that his brain had been too little, that it was all due to natural necessity, etc.—what a horror at such an acquittal in comparison with the sentence of Christianity over him that he would go to Hell, if he was not converted . . ." when he writes thus, he has provided an argument for the necessity of freedom in a Christian universe. At the same time he has anticipated the development which, since his own time, has trans-

formed the world.

Physiology has got even more wonderful spectacles on its nose, and human behaviour can, with still greater precision, be described as a link in a dialectical chain of cause and effect. All modern progress in pedagogics, penal law, etc., can be traced back to this fundamental view of human conduct.

For the Christian thinker, however, the scientific achievement and viewpoint are quite irrelevant; and when the age has found its way to Kierkegaard, it is partly due to the superior way in which, with his dialectical stringency, he has realised this and shaken off everything that seemed irrelevant to him, in order to keep to the fundamental idea, of human freedom as an absolute. His work has become a reservoir for all such philosophical views which fight the fundamental idea that carries the progressive ideas of our age forward.

So far, Kierkegaard is the great classic of *reaction*, who sharpened the dialectical opposites to the extreme and refused any compromise. But in so far as he himself possessed all the possibilities for mastering the Super-Ego which chained him to this reactionary attitude, so hostile to life, he was something more than merely that, he was rather an anticipation, a promise, a suggestion, an omen, than an accomplished achievement. We can detect in him the potentialities of the resolution that he denies. It is this which distinguishes him from his contemporary spiritual compatriots, whose existentialism is a speculative *tour de force*, as in Heidegger or Brunschvicg, or a despair, sickness-unto-death, as in Sartre.

PETER P. RHODE.

NOTES

EUGENIO MONTALE, the leading Left poet in Italy.

ELIO VITTORINI, author of *Conversation in Sicily* (Wilfrid Davies) which deals with the war in Italy and the partisans; translator of D. H. Lawrence and T. F. Powys; until recently editor of the Communist magazine *Polytechnico*.

ANONYMOUS GREEK POET. As this poet is in Greece at present, the name must be omitted. The full work, of some 50,000 words, expresses with a subtle range and depth the experience of the anti-fascist political prisoners.

CORNAROS and CARAMPELOS: the fate of these writers is explanation enough why the above-mentioned poet must remain "anon."

GUILLEVIC: French poet with a verse-style of intense concision in lyrical statement. The anonymous work, the novel by Melpo Axioti, and A. Kedros's *Ship in the Middle of the City*, show the great literature which is emerging from the Greek struggle for Liberation.

EFFENDI KAPIEV: a native of Daghestan (a small republic of the U.S.S.R. situated by the Caspian Sea). Made large collections of his peoples' folklore and songs; wrote down the chants of the old bard Suleiman Stalsky (called by Gorki "the Homer of the 20th century"); and in *The Poet*, based on Stalsky, deals with the relation between childhood dream and group unity in poetic inspiration, and thus shows an important stage in the Soviet transformation of symbolist themes. He died in 1944 before *The Poet* appeared in print.

BORIS TASLITZKI: French painter best known for his ruthless depiction of life in the concentration camps.

ANGUS WILSON has recently published a collection of stories, *The Wrong Set*. He is at present at work on a study of Zola.

MALCOLM LOWRY: the prose is a passage from an unpublished pre-war novel. He is now back in British Columbia, where he is at work on a new volume in his series of novels, of which *Under the Volcano* was so notable a part.

PETER P. RHODE: a young Danish critic.

J. TUWIN: this great Polish poet, here represented by a set of poems on the Word, will be discussed in a critical essay in *Arena* 3, when his important new long poem will be analysed and partly translated.

PABLO NERUDA. This poem was read (in the original Spanish) by Neruda at his dramatic appearance at the Paris Peace Congress in April—his first appearance after going underground in fascist Chile.

CORRADO ALVARO: *Man is Strong*, his novel about the Arabian Partisans, has recently been translated by Francis Fienaye and published by Sampson Low.

